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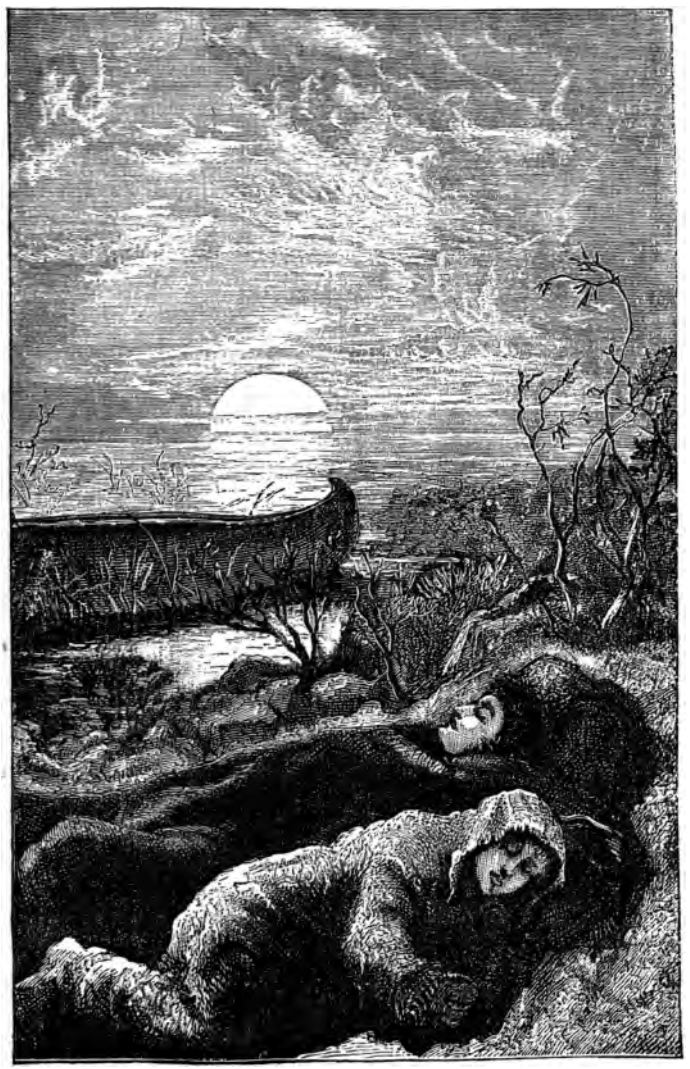
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THE Red Man's Revenge

R. M. BALLANTYNE





VICTOR AND IAN ON THE SHORES OF LAKE WINNIPEG.—Page 27.
(Frontispiece.)

THE RED MAN'S REVENGE

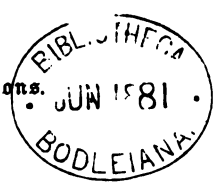
A Tale of

THE RED RIVER FLOOD.

By R. M. BALLANTYNE,

AUTHOR OF "POST HASTE;" "IN THE TRACK OF THE TROOPS;" "THE SETTLER AND THE SAVAGE;" "UNDER THE WAVES;" "RIVERS OF ICE;" "BLACK IVORY;" "THE PIRATE CITY;" "THE NORSEMEN IN THE WEST;" "THE IRON HORSE;" "THE FLOATING LIGHT;" "ERLING THE BOLD;" "FIGHTING THE FLAMES;" "SHIFTING WINDS;" "DEEP DOWN;" "THE LIGHTHOUSE;" "THE LIFEBOAT;" "GASCOYNE;" "THE GOLDEN DREAM," ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE small and scattered settlement on the banks of Red River, of the north, was a sort of oasis in the desert of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories at the time of the occurrence of the great Flood which forms the groundwork of this tale. It was much the same when I sojourned there in 1841-42. It is now, under the new name of Winnipeg, a rising frontier town of the Dominion of Canada, in the province of Manitoba.

All the details, as well as the leading incidents of the flood, are, I believe, in strict accordance with fact. The tale itself is fiction.

R. M. B.

HARROW-ON-THE-HILL, 1880.





bluff, jovial, fiery, hot-tempered, irascible old father, that girl was Elsie Ravenshaw.

Although a gem, Elsie was exceedingly imperfect. Had she been the reverse she would not have been worth writing about.

Old Ravenshaw, as his familiars styled him, was a settler, if we may use such a term in reference to one who was, perhaps, among the most unsettled of men. He had settled with his family on the banks of the Red River. The colony on that river is now one of the frontier towns of Canada. At the time we write of, it was a mere oasis in the desert, not even an offshoot of civilisation, for it owed its existence chiefly to the fact that retiring servants of the Hudson's Bay Fur Company congregated there to spend the evening of life, far beyond the Canadian boundary, in the heart of that great wilderness where they had spent their working days, and on the borders of that grand prairie where the red man and the buffalo roamed at will, and the conventionalities of civilised life troubled them not.

To this haven of rest Samuel Ravenshaw had retired, after spending an active life in the service of the fur-traders, somewhat stiffened in the joints by age and a rough career, and a good deal soured in disposition because of promotion having, as he thought, been too long deferred.

Besides Elsie, old Ravenshaw possessed some other gems of inferior lustre. His wife Maggie, a stout, well-favoured lady, with an insufficient intellect and unbounded good humour, was of considerable intrinsic value, but highly unpolished. His second daughter, Cora, was a thin slip of sixteen years, like her mother in some respects—pretty, attractive, and disposed to take life easily. His eldest son, Victor, a well-grown lad of

fourteen, was a rough diamond, if a diamond at all, with a soul centred on sport. His second son, Anthony, between five and six, was large and robust, like his father. Not having been polished at that time, it is hard to say what sort of gem Tony was. When engaged in mischief—his besetting foible—his eyes shone like carbuncles with unholy light. He was the plague of the family. Of course, therefore, he was the beloved of his parents.

Such were the chief inmates of Willow Creek, as old Ravenshaw styled his house and property.

It was midwinter. The owner of Willow Creek stood at his parlour window, smoking and gazing. There was not much to look at, for snow had overwhelmed and buried the landscape, fringed every twig of the willows, and obliterated the frozen river.

Elsie was seated by the stove, embroidering a pair of moccasins.

"Victor is bringing down some of the lads to shoot to-day, father," she said, casting a furtive glance at her sire.

"Humph! that boy does nothing but shoot," growled the old man, who was a giant in body if not in spirit. "Who all is he bringing?"

"There's John Flett, and David Mowat, and Sam Hayes, and Herr Winklemann, and Ian Macdonald, and Louis Lambert—all the best shots, I suppose," said Elsie, bending over her work.

"The best shots!" cried Mr. Ravenshaw, turning from the window with a sarcastic laugh. "Louis Lambert, indeed, and Winklemann are crack shots, and John Flett is not bad, but the others are poor hands. Mowat can only shoot straight with a crooked gun, and as for that half-cracked schoolmaster, Ian Macdonald, he would miss a barn door at fifty paces unless he were to shut his eyes and fire at random, in which case he'd have some chance—"

"Here they is; the shooters is comin'. Hooray!" shouted Master Anthony Ravenshaw, as he burst into the room with a scalping-knife in one hand and a wooden gun in the other. "An' I's goin' to shoot too, daddy!"

"So you are, Tony, my boy!" cried the old trader, catching up the pride of his heart in his strong arms and tossing him towards the ceiling. "You shall shoot before long with a real gun."

Tony knocked the pipe out of his father's mouth, and was proceeding to operate on his half-bald head with the scalping-knife, when Cora, who entered the room at the moment, sprang forward and wrenched the weapon from his grasp.

"We'll give them dinner after the shooting is over, shan't we, father?" asked Cora.

"Of course, my dear, of course," replied the hospitable old gentleman, giving the pride of his heart a sounding kiss as he put him down. "Set your mother to work on a pie, and get Miss Trim to help you with a lot of those cakes you make so famously."

As he spoke there was a sudden clattering in the porch. The young men were taking off their snow-shoes and stamping the snow from off their leggings and moccasined feet.

"Here we are, father!" cried a bright, sturdy youth, as he ushered in his followers. "Of course Elsie has prepared you for our sudden invasion. The fact is that we got up the match on the spur of the moment, because I found that Ian had a holiday."

"No explanation required, Victor. Glad to see you all, boys. Sit down," said Mr. Ravenshaw, shaking hands all round.

The youths who were thus heartily welcomed presented *a fine man*ly appearance. They were clad in the capotes,

leggings, fur caps, moccasins, and fingerless mittens usually worn by the men of the settlement in winter.

That tall handsome fellow, with the curly black hair and flashing eyes, who bears himself so confidently as he greets the sisters, is Louis Lambert. The thickset youth behind him, with the shock of flaxen hair and imperceptible moustache, is Herr Winklemann, a German farmer's son, and a famed buffalo-hunter. The ungainly man, of twenty-four apparently—or thereabouts—with the plain but kindly face, and the frame nearly as strong as that of the host himself, is Ian Macdonald. In appearance he is a rugged backwoodsman. In reality he is the schoolmaster of that part of the widely-scattered colony.

The invitation to sit down was not accepted. Daylight was short-lived in those regions at that season of the year. They sallied forth to the work in hand.

"You've had the target put up, Cora?" asked Victor, as he went out.

"Yes, in the old place."

"Where is Tony?"

"I don't know," said Cora, looking round. "He was here just now, trying to scalp father."

"You'll find him at the target before you, no doubt," said Elsie, putting away her moccasins as she rose to aid in the household preparations.

The target was placed against the bank of the river, so that the bullets might find a safe retreat. The competitors stood at about a hundred yards' distance in front of it. The weapons used were single-barrelled smooth-bores, with flint locks. Percussion locks had not at that time come into fashion, and long ranges had not yet been dreamed of.

"Come, open the ball, Lambert," said Victor.

The handsome youth at once stepped forward, and old

Mr. Ravenshaw watched him with an approving smile as he took aim. Puff! went the powder in the pan, but no sound followed save the peal of laughter with which the miss-fire was greeted. The touch-hole was pricked, and next time the ball sped to its mark. It hit the target two inches above the bull's-eye.

The "well done" with which the shot was hailed was cut short by an appalling yell, and little Tony was seen to tumble from behind the target. Rolling head over heels, he curled himself round in agony, sprang up with a spasmodic bound, dropped upon his haunches, turned over a complete somersault, fell on his back with a fearful shriek, and lay dead upon the snow!

The whole party rushed in consternation towards the boy, but before they had reached him he leaped up and burst into a fit of gleeful laughter, which ended in a cheer and a savage war-whoop as he scampered up the track which led to the house, and disappeared over the brow of the river's bank.

"The imp was joking!" exclaimed Mr. Ravenshaw, as he stopped and wiped the cold perspiration from his brow.

At that moment a Red Indian appeared on the scene, in his blanket robe, paint, and feathers. Attracted by the shot, he had come to look on. Now, the old fur-trader's nerves had received a tremendous shock, and the practical jest which the pride of his heart had perpetrated had roused the irascibility of his nature, so that an explosion became unavoidable. In these circumstances the arrival of the Indian seemed opportune, for the old gentleman knew that this particular savage was a chief, and had visited the colony for the purpose of making inquiries into the new religion reported to be taught by certain white men in black garments; and Mr. Ravenshaw,

besides having very little regard for missionaries, had a very strong contempt for those Indians who became their disciples. He therefore relieved himself on the red man.

"What do you want here, Petawanaquat?" he demanded sternly, in the language of the Indian.

"The Little Wolf," replied the Indian, referring to himself, for such was the interpretation of his name, "wishes to see how his white brothers shoot."

"Let the Little Wolf put his tail between his legs and be gone," cried the angry old man. "He is not wanted here. Come, be off!"

The chief looked straight in the eyes of the trader with a dark scowl, then, turning slowly on his heel, stalked solemnly away.

There was an irrepressible laugh at this episode as the group of marksmen returned to their former position. Mr. Ravenshaw, however, soon left them and returned home. Here he found Miss Trim in a state of considerable agitation; she had just encountered the redskin! Miss Trim was a poor relation of Mrs. Ravenshaw. She had been invited by her brother-in-law to leave England and come to Red River to act as governess to Tony and assistant-companion in the family. She had arrived that autumn in company with a piano, on which she was expected to exercise Elsie and Cora. Petawanaquat, being the first "really wild and painted savage" she had seen, made a deep impression on her.

"Oh, Mr. Ravenshaw, I have seen *such* an object in the garden!" she exclaimed, in a gushing torrent—she always spoke in a torrent—"and it was all I could do to stagger into the house without fainting. Such eyes! with black cheeks and a red nose—at least, it looked red, but I was in such a state that I couldn't make sure whether it was the nose or the chin, and my shoe came off as I ran away,

having broken the tie in the morning. And such a yell as it gave!—the creature, not the shoe-tie—but I escaped, and peeped out of the upper window—the one in the gable, you know, with the green blind, where you can see the garden from end to end, and I found it had disappeared, though I can't understand—"

"Tut, tut, Miss Trim; how you do gallop! Was it a beast?" asked the old trader.

"A beast? No; a man—a savage."

"Oh! I understand; it was that scoundrel Petawanaquat," said Sam Ravenshaw, with a laugh; "he's Little Wolf by name, and a big thief by practice, no doubt. You needn't fear him, however, he's not so dangerous as he looks, and I gave him a rebuff just now that will make him shy of Willow Creek.—Ha, Tony, you rascal! Come here, sir."

Tony came at once, with such a gleeful visage that his father's intended chastisement for the recent practical joke ended in a parental caress.

Bitterly did Ian Macdonald repent of his agreeing to join the shooting party that day. Owing to some defect in his vision or nervous system, he was a remarkably bad shot, though in everything else he was an expert and stalwart backwoodsman, as well as a good scholar. But when his friend Victor invited him he could not refuse, because it offered him an opportunity of spending some time in the society of Elsie Ravenshaw, and that to him was heaven upon earth! Little of her society, however, did the unfortunate teacher enjoy that day, for handsome Louis Lambert engrossed not only Elsie, but the mother and father as well. He had beaten all his competitors at the target, but, to do him justice, did not boast of that; neither did he make any reference to the fact that Ian had twice missed the target, though he did not spare the

bad shooting of some of the other youths; this, no doubt, because he and Ian had been fast friends for many years. Jealousy—at least on the part of Ian—now seemed about to interfere with the old friendship. Moreover, Lambert had brought to Mrs. Ravenshaw a gift of a collar made of the claws of a grizzly bear, shot by himself in the Rocky Mountains. Elsie admired the collar with genuine interest, and said she would give anything to possess one like it. Cora, with the coquettishness of sixteen, said, with a laugh and a blush, that she would not accept such a ridiculous thing if it were offered to her. Ian Macdonald groaned in spirit, for, with his incapacity to shoot, he knew that Elsie's wish could never be gratified by *him*.

Seeing that Lambert was bent on keeping Elsie as much as possible to himself, Ian devoted himself to Cora, but Cora was cross. Feeling it up-hill work, he soon rose to say good-bye, and left Willow Creek before the others.

"Don't look so crestfallen, man," said old Mr. Ravenshaw heartily, as he shook hands; "it's nobler work to teach the young idea how to shoot than to be able to hit a bull's-eye."

"True, but he who cannot hit a bull's-eye," returned Ian, with a smile, "can scarcely be expected to touch a maiden's—I mean a grizzly's heart."

A shout of laughter from Lambert greeted him as he left the house. His way home lay over the frozen bed of the river. Victor accompanied him part of the way.

"That was a strange slip for an unromantic fellow like you to make about a maiden's heart, Ian," said Victor, looking up at the rugged countenance of his friend.

"'Unromantic,' eh? Well, I suppose I am."

"Of course you are," said Victor, with the overweening

assurance of youth. "Come, let's sit down here for a few minutes and discuss the point."

He sat down on a snowdrift; Ian kicked off his snow-shoes and leaned against the bank.

"You're the most grave, sensible, good-natured, matter-of-fact, unsentimental, unselfish fellow I ever met with," resumed Victor. "If you were a romantic goose I wouldn't like you half as much as I do."

"Men are sometimes romantic without being geese," returned Ian; "but I have not time to discuss that point just now. Tell me, for I am anxious about it, have you spoken to your father about selling the field with the knoll to my father?"

"Yes, and he flatly refused to sell it. I'm really sorry, Ian, but you know how determined my father is. Once he says a thing he sticks to it, even though it should be to his own disadvantage."

"That's bad, Victor, very bad. It will raise ill-blood between them, and estrange our families. You think there's no chance?"

"None whatever."

"One more word before we part. Do you know much about that redskin whom your father called Petawanaquat?"

"Not much, except that he has come from a considerable distance to make inquiries, he says, about the Christian religion. He has been prowling about our place for a few days, and father, who has no great love to missionaries, and has strong suspicions of converted Indians, has twice treated him rather roughly."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Victor. These fellows are sometimes very revengeful. If you'll be advised by me you'll keep a sharp eye upon Petawanaquat. There, I'll say no more. You know I'm not an alarmist. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, old boy."

"I say."

"Well?"

"It was an *awfully* bad shot, that last of mine."

"It was," admitted Victor, with a laugh, "to miss a thing as big as a door at a hundred yards is only so-so."

"No chance of improvement, I fear," said Ian, with a sigh.

"Oh, don't say that," replied Victor. "Practice, perseverance, and patience, you know, overcome every—"

"Yes, yes. I know that well. Good-bye."

They shook hands again, and were soon striding over the snow to their respective homes.

CHAPTER II.

CONFLICTING ELEMENTS AND A CATASTROPHE.

HOARY winter passed away, and genial spring returned to rejoice the land.

In a particularly amiable frame of mind, old Ravenshaw went out one morning to smoke.

Everything had gone well that morning. Breakfast had been punctual; appetite good; rheumatics in abeyance; the girls lively; and Miss Trim less of a torrent than was her wont. Mrs. Ravenshaw's intellect had more than once almost risen to the ordinary human average, and Master Tony had been better—perhaps it were more correct to say less wicked—than usual.

Old Ravenshaw was what his friends styled a heavy smoker, so was his kitchen chimney; but then the chimney had the excuse of being compelled to smoke, whereas its owner's insane act was voluntary.

Be not afraid, reader. We have no intention of entering into an argument with smokers. They are a pig-headed generation. We address those who have not yet become monomaniacs as regards tobacco.

In order to the full enjoyment of his pipe, the old gentleman had built on a knoll what Elsie styled a summer-house. Regardless of seasons, however—as he was of most things—her father used this temple at all seasons of the year, and preferred to call it a smoking-

box. Now, as this smoking-box, with its surroundings, had much to do with the issues of our story, we bring it under particular notice. It resembled a large sentry-box, and the willow-clad knoll on which it stood was close to the river. Being elevated slightly above the rest of the country, a somewhat extended view of river and plain was obtainable therefrom. Samuel Ravenshaw loved to contemplate this view through the medium of smoke. Thus seen it was hazy and in accord with his own idea of most things. The sun shone warmly into the smoking-box. It sparkled on the myriad dew-drops that hung on the willows, and swept in golden glory over the rolling plains. The old gentleman sat down, puffed, and was happy. The narcotic influence operated, and the irascible demon in his breast fell sound asleep.

How often do bright sunshine and profound calm precede a storm? Is not that a truism—if not a newism? The old gentleman had barely reduced himself to quiescence, and the demon had only just begun to snore, when a cloud, no bigger than a man's body, arose on the horizon. Gradually it drew near, partially obscured the sky, and overshadowed the smoking-box in the form of Angus Macdonald, the father of Ian. (The demon ceased snoring!)

"Coot tay to you, sir," said Angus. "You will pe enchoyin' your pipe this fine mornin'."

"Yes, Angus, I am," replied Ravenshaw, with as much urbanity as he could assume—and it wasn't much, for he suspected the cause of his neighbour's visit—"you 'd better sit down and light your own."

Angus accepted the invitation, and proceeded to load with much deliberation.

Now it must be known that the Highlander loved the view from that knoll as much as did his neighbour. It

reminded him of the old country where he had been born and bred on a hill-top. He coveted that willow knoll intensely, desiring to build a house on it, and, being prosperous, was willing to give for it more than its value, for his present dwelling lay somewhat awkwardly in the creek, a little higher up the river, so that the willows on the knoll interfered vexatiously with his view.

"It 's a peautiful spote this!" observed Angus, after a few preliminary puffs.

"It is," answered the old trader curtly (and the demon awoke).

Angus made no rejoinder for a few minutes, but continued to puff great clouds with considerable emphasis from his compressed lips. Mr. Ravenshaw returned the fire with interest.

"It 'll no pe for sellin' the knowl, ye are?" said Angus.

The demon was fairly roused now.

"No, Angus Macdonald," said the trader sternly, "I 'll *not* sell it. I 've told you already more than once, and it is worse than ill-judged, it is impertinent of you to come bothering me to part with my land."

"Ho! inteed!" exclaimed Angus, rising in wrath, and cramming his pipe into his vest pocket; "it is herself that will pe pothering you no more apout your dirty land, Samyool Ruvnshaw."

He strode from the spot with a look of ineffable scorn, and the air of an offended chieftain.

Old Ravenshaw tried to resume his tranquillity, but the demon was self-willed, and tobacco had lost its power. There were more clouds, however, in store for him that morning.

It so fell out that Ian Macdonald, unable to bear the suspense of uncertainty any longer, and all ignorant of his

father's visit to the old trader, had made up his mind to bring things to a point that very morning by formally asking permission to pay his addresses to Elsie Ravenshaw. Knowing the old man's habits, he went straight to the smoking-box. If he had set out half an hour sooner he would have met his own father and saved himself trouble. As it was, they missed each other.

Mr. Ravenshaw had only begun to feel slightly calmed when Ian presented himself, with a humble, propitiatory air. The old man hated humility in every form, even its name. He regarded it as a synonym for hypocrisy. The demon actually leaped within him, but the old man had a powerful will. He seized his spiritual enemy, throttled, and held him down.

"Good-morning, Mr. Ravenshaw."

"Good-morning."

Nothing more was said by either for a few minutes. Ian was embarrassed. He had got up a set speech and forgotten it. He was shy, but he was also resolute. Drawing himself up suddenly he said, with an earnest, honest look—

"Mr. Ravenshaw, I love your daughter" (there was only one daughter in Ian's estimation!), "and I come to ask leave to woo her. If, by earnest devotion and—"

"Ian Macdonald," interrupted the old gentleman, in a voice of suppressed anger, "you may save yourself and me the trouble of more talk on this subject. Your father has just been here wanting me to sell him this knoll. Now, look here" (he rose, and stepping out of the smoking-box, pointed to Angus Macdonald's house, which was full in view), "you see that house, young man. Mark what I say. I will sell this knoll to your father, and give my daughter to you, when you take that house,

and with your own unaided hands place it on the top of this knoll!"

This was meant by the old trader as a bitterly facetious way of indicating the absolute hopelessness of the case. Ian accepted it in that light, for he was well aware that Samuel Ravenshaw's firmness—or obstinacy—was insurmountable. He did not despair, however; true love never does that; but he felt tremendously cast down. Without a word or look of reproach he turned and walked slowly away.

Once again the old trader sought comfort in his pipe, but found none. Besides feeling extremely indignant with the Macdonalds, father and son, for what he styled their presumption, he was now conscious of having treated both with undue severity. Dashing his pipe on the ground, he thrust both hands into his coat pockets, and returned towards his dwelling. On the way he unfortunately met Petawanaquat in one of his fields, leaning composedly over a gate. That intelligent redskin had not yet finished his inquiries at the missionary village. He had appeared more than once at Willow Creek, and seemed to hover round the old trader like a moth round a candle. The man was innocent of any evil intent on this occasion, but Ravenshaw would have quarrelled with an angel just then.

"What are you doing here? Be off!" he said sternly.

The Indian either did not or would not understand, and the old man, seizing him by the arm, thrust him violently through the gateway.

All the hot blood of the Petawanaquats, from Adam downwards, seemed to leap through the red man's veins and concentrate in his right hand as he turned fiercely on the trader and drew his scalping-knife. Quick as lightning Ravenshaw hit out with his fist, and

knocked the Indian down, then, turning on his heel, walked away.

For a moment Petawanaquat lay stunned. Recovering, he arose, and his dark glittering eyes told of a purpose of deadly revenge. The trader was still in sight. The Indian picked up his gun, glided swiftly behind a tree, and took a long steady aim. Just then little Tony rushed from the house and leaped into his father's arms, where he received an unusually warm embrace, for the trader wanted some sort of relief for his feelings. The Indian's finger was pressing the trigger at the moment. Death was very near Samuel Ravenshaw just then, but the finger relaxed and the gun was lowered. A more terrible form of revenge had flashed into the mind of the savage. Gliding quietly from his position, he entered the willows and disappeared.

Meanwhile Angus Macdonald returned in no very amiable mood to his own house. It was a small house; had been built by its owner, and was, like most of the other houses of the colony at that time, a good solid log structure—a sort of Noah's ark on a small scale. It stood on a flat piece of mother earth, without any special foundation except a massive oblong wooden frame to which all the superstructure was attached. You might, if strong enough, have grasped it by the ridge-pole and carried it bodily away without tearing up any foundation or deranging the fabric. It was kept in order and managed by an elderly sister of Angus, named Martha, for Angus was a widower. His only son Ian dwelt in the school-house, a mile farther up the river.

Martha's strong point was fowls. We are too ignorant of that subject to go into particulars. We can only say that she was an adept at fowls. Martha's chickens were always tender and fat, and their eggs were the largest and

freshest in Red River. We introduce these fowls solely because one of them acted a very important part on a very critical occasion. As well might the geese who saved Rome be omitted from history as Martha Macdonald's Cochin-China hen which—well, we won't say what just yet. That hen was frightfully plain. Why Cochin-China hens should have such long legs and wear feather trousers are questions which naturalists must settle among themselves. Being a humorous man, Angus had named her Beauty. She was a very cross hen, and her feather unmentionables fitted badly. Moreover, she was utterly useless, and never laid an egg, which was fortunate, for if she had laid one it would have been an eg-regious monstrosity. She was obviously tough. If they had slain her for the table they would have had to cut her up with a hand-saw, or grind her into meal to fit her for use. Besides all this, Beauty was a widow. When her husband died—probably of disgust—she took to crowing on her own account. She received Angus with a crow when he entered the house after his interview with Ravenshaw, and appeared to listen intently as he poured his sorrows into his sister's ear.

"It's up at the knowl I've peen, Martha, an' I left Samyool Ruvnshaw there in a fery pad temper—fery pad inteed. He'll come oot of it, what*ever*."

"An' he'll not be for sellin' you the knowl?" asked Martha.

"No, he won't," replied Angus.

From this point they went off into a very long-winded discussion of the pros and cons of the case, which, however, we will spare the reader, and return to Willow Creek. The bed of the creek, near to the point where it joined the Red River, was a favourite resort of Master Tony. Thither he went that same afternoon to play.



PETAWANAQUAT SEIZES TONY.

Having observed the child's habits, Petawanaquat paddled his canoe to the same point and hid it and himself among the overhanging bushes of the creek. In the course of his gambols Tony approached the place. One stroke of the paddle sent the light birch-bark canoe like an arrow across the stream. The Indian sprang on shore. Tony gave him one scared look and was about to utter an appalling yell, when a red hand covered his mouth and another red hand half throttled him.

Petawanaquat bundled the poor child into the bottom of his canoe, wrapped a leather coat round his head, spread a buffalo robe over him, gave him a smart rap on the head to keep him quiet, and paddled easily out into the stream. Steadily, but not too swiftly, he went down the river, down the rapids, and past the Indian settlement without attracting particular notice. Once the buffalo robe moved; the paddle descended on it with a sounding whack, and it did not move again. Before night closed, the Indian was paddling over the broad bosom of Lake Winnipeg.

Of course, Tony was soon missed; his haunts were well known; Miss Trim traced his footprints to the place where he had been seized, saw evidences of the struggle, the nature of which she correctly guessed, and came shrieking back to the house, where she went off into hysterics, and was unable to tell anything about the matter.

Fortunately, Victor was there; he also traced the footsteps. Instead of returning home he ran straight to the school-house, which he reached out of breath.

"Come, Ian, come!" he gasped. "Tony's been carried off—Petawanaquat! Bring your canoe and gun; all the ammunition you can lay hands on!"

Ian asked for no explanations; he ran into the house, shouldered a small bag of pemmican, gave his gun and

ammunition to Victor, told his assistant to keep the school going till his return, and ran with his friend down to the river, where his own birch canoe lay on the bank.

A few minutes sufficed to launch it. Both Ian and Victor were expert canoe-men. Straining their powers to the utmost, they were soon far down the Red River, in hot pursuit of the fugitive.

CHAPTER III.

THE PURSUIT BEGUN.

THERE is something delightfully exhilarating in a chase, whether it be after man or beast. How the blood careers! How the nerves tingle! But you know all about it, reader. We have said sufficient.

There was enough of righteous indignation in Victor's bosom to have consumed Petawanaquat, and ground enough to justify the fiercest resolves. Was not the kidnapper a redskin—a low, mean, contemptible savage? Was not the kidnapped one his brother—his "own" brother? And such a brother! One of a thousand, with mischief enough in him, if rightly directed, to make half a dozen ordinary men! The nature of the spirit which animated Victor was obvious on his compressed lips, his frowning brows, his gleaming eyes. The strength of his muscles was indicated by the foam that fled from his paddle.

Ian Macdonald was not less excited, but more under self-control than his friend. There was a fixed look in his plain but pleasant face, and a tremendous sweep in his long arms as he plied the paddle, that told of unfathomed energy. The canoe being a mere egg-shell, leaped forward at each quick stroke "like a thing of life."

There was no time to lose. They knew that, for the Indian had probably got a good start of them, and, being

a powerful man, animated by the certainty of pursuit sooner or later, would not only put his strength but his endurance to the test. If they were to overtake him it must be by superhuman exertion. Lake Winnipeg was twenty miles off. They must catch up the Indian before he reached it, as otherwise it would be impossible to tell in which direction he had gone.

They did not pause to make inquiries of the settlers on the banks by the way, but they hailed several canoes, whose occupants said they had seen the Indian going quietly down stream some hours before—*alone* in his canoe!

"Never mind, Vic, push on," said Ian; "of course he would make Tony lie flat down."

The end of the settlement was passed, and they swept on into the wilderness beyond. Warming to their work, they continued to paddle hour after hour—steadily, persistently, with clockwork regularity of stroke, but never decreasing force. To save time they, as it were, cut off corners at the river-bends, and just shaved the points as they went by.

"Have a care, Ian!" exclaimed Victor, at one of these places, as his paddle touched the bottom. "We don't draw much water, to be sure, but a big stone might—hah!"

A roar of dismay burst from the youth and his companion as the canoe rasped over a stone.

We have said that the birch canoe was an egg-shell. The word is scarcely figurative. The slightest touch over a stone has a tendency to rip the bark of such a slender craft, or break off the resinous gum with which the seams are pitched. Water began to pour in.

"Too bad!" exclaimed Victor, flinging his paddle ashore, as he stepped over the side into water not much above his ankles, and pulled the canoe slowly to land.

"An illustration of the proverb, 'The more haste the less speed,'" sighed Ian, as he stepped into the water and assisted in lifting the canoe tenderly to dry ground.

"Oh, it's all very well for you to take it philosophically, but you know our chance is gone. If it was *your* brother we were after you wouldn't be so cool."

"He is Elsie's brother," replied Ian, "and that makes me quite as keen as if he were my own, besides keeping me cool. Come, Vic, don't be cross, but light the fire and get out the gum."

While he spoke Ian was actively untying a bundle which contained awls and wattape, a small pliable root, with which to repair the injury. The gum had to be melted, so that Victor found some relief to his feelings in kindling a fire. The break was not a bad one. With nimble fingers Ian sewed a patch of bark over it. While that was being done, Victor struck a light with flint and steel, and soon had a blazing firebrand ready.

"Hand it here, Vic," said Ian.

He covered the stitches with melted gum, blew the charcoal red-hot, passed it here and there over the old seams where they exhibited signs of leakage, and in little more than half an hour had the canoe as tight as a bottle. Once more they embarked and drove her like an arrow down stream.

But precious time had been lost, and it was dark when they passed from the river and rested on the bosom of the mighty fresh-water sea.

"It's of no use going on without knowing which shore the redskin has followed," said Ian, as he suddenly ceased work and rested his paddle on the gunwale.

"It's of no use to remain where we are," replied the impatient Victor, looking back at his comrade.

"Yes, it is," returned Ian, "the moon will rise in an

hour or so and enable us to make observations; meanwhile we can rest. Sooner or later we shall be compelled to rest. It will be a wise economy of time to do so now when nothing else can be done."

Victor was so tired and sleepy by that time that he could scarcely reply. Ian laughed quietly, and shoved the canoe among some reeds, where it lay on a soft bed. At the same time he advised his companion to go to sleep without delay.

More than half asleep already, he obeyed in silence, waded to the shore, and sat down on a bank to take off his moccasins. In this position and act he fell asleep.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Ian, coming up with the paddles and pemmican bag; "too soon, Vic, too soon, lad" (he tumbled him over on the bank); "come, one mouthful of grub first, then off with the moccasins, and down we go."

Victor picked himself up with a yawn. On ordinary occasions a backwoodsman pays some little attention to the comforts of his encampment, but our heroes were in no condition to mind such trifles. They pulled off their wet moccasins, indeed, and put on dry ones, but having done that they merely groped in the dark for the flattest piece of ground in the neighbourhood, then each rolled himself in his blanket and lay, or rather fell, down.

"Hah!" gasped Victor.

"Wa's wrong?" sighed Ian faintly.

"Put m' shoulder 'n a puddle, 'at 's all," lisped Victor.

"T'ke 't out o' the purl, then—oh!" groaned Ian.

"W'as 'e marrer now, eh?" sighed Victor.

"On'y a big stone i' m' ribs."

"Shove 't out o' y'rribs 'en an' 'old y'rtongue."

Profound slumber stopped the conversation at this point, and the frogs that croaked and whistled in the swamps had it all to themselves.

Deep tranquillity reigned on the shores of Lake Winnipeg during the midnight hours, for the voices of the frogs served rather to accent than to disturb the calm. Stars twinkled at their reflections in the water, which extended like a black mirror to the horizon. They gave out little light, however, and it was not until the upper edge of the full moon arose that surrounding objects became dimly visible. The pale light edged the canoe, silvered the rocks, tipped the rushes, and at last, touching the point of Ian's upturned nose, awoke him.*

He leaped up with a start instantly, conscious of his situation, and afraid lest he had slept too long.

"Hi! leve! leve! awake! up!" he exclaimed in a vigorous undertone.

Victor growled, turned on his other side with a deep sigh, wanted to be let alone, became suddenly conscious, and sprang up in alarm.

"We're too late!"

"No, we're not, Vic. The moon is just rising, but we must be stirring. Time's precious."

Victor required no urging. He was fully alive to the situation. A few minutes sufficed to get the canoe ready and roll up their blankets, during the performance of which operations they each ate several substantial mouthfuls of pemmican.

Looking carefully round before pushing off the canoe to see that nothing was forgotten, Ian observed some chips of wood on the beach close at hand.

"See, Vic!" he said eagerly; "some one has been here —perhaps the Indian."

They examined the chips, which had been recently cut.

"It's not easy to make out footprints here," said Ian, going down on his knees the better to observe the ground;

* See Frontispiece.

"and so many settlers and Indians pass from time to time, having little boys with them too, that—. I say, look here, Vic, this little footmark might or might not be Tony's, but moccasins are so much alike that—"

"Out o' the light, man; if you were made o' glass the moon *might* get through you. Why, yes, it *is* Tony's moccasin!" cried Victor, in eager excitement. "I know it by the patch, for I saw Elsie putting it on this very morning. Look, speak, man! don't you see it? A square patch on the ball of the right foot!"

"Yes, yes; I see it," said Ian, going down on his knees in a spirit of semi-worship, and putting his nose close to the ground.

He would fain have kissed the spot that had been pressed by a patch put on by Elsie, but he was "unromantic," and refrained.

"Now," he said, springing up with alacrity, "that settles the question. At least it shows that there is strong probability of their having taken the left shore of the lake."

"Come along, then, let's after them," cried Victor impatiently, pushing off the canoe.

The moment she floated—which she did in about four inches of water—they stepped swiftly yet gently into her; for bark canoes require tender treatment at all times, even when urgent speed is needful. Gliding into deep water, they once more dipped their paddles, deep and fast, and danced merrily over the moonlit sea—for a sea Lake Winnipeg certainly is, being upwards of three hundred miles long, and a gathering together of many waters from all parts of the vast wilderness of Rupert's Land.

After two hours of steady work they paused to rest.

"Now, Ian," said Victor, leaning against the wooden bar at his back, and resting his paddle across the canoe,

"Venus tells me that the sun is about to bestir himself, and something within me tells me that empty space is a bad stomachic; so, out with the pemmican bag, and hand over a junk."

Ian drew his hunting-knife, struck it into the mass of meat, and chipped off a piece the size of his fist, which he handed to his comrade.

Probably our readers are aware that pemmican is made of dried buffalo meat pounded to shreds and mixed with melted fat. Being thus half-cooked in the making, it can be used with or without further cookery. Sewed up in its bag, it will keep good for months, or even years, and is magnificent eating, but requires a strong digestion. Ian and Victor were gifted with that requisite. They fed luxuriously. A draught from the crystal lake went down their unsophisticated throats like nectar, and they resumed their paddles like giants refreshed.

Venus mounted like a miniature moon into the glorious blue. Her perfect image went off in the opposite direction, for there was not the ghost of a zephyr to ruffle the deep. Presently the sun followed in her wake, and scattered the battalions of cloudland with artillery of molten gold. Little white gulls, with red legs and beaks, came dipping over the water, solemnly wondering at the intruders. The morning mists rolling along before the resistless monarch of day confused the visible world for a time, so that between refraction and reflection and buoyant spirits Victor Ravenshaw felt that at last he had found the realms of fairyland, and a feeling of certainty that he should soon rescue his brother filled him with exultation.

But the exultation was premature. Noon found them toiling on, and still no trace of the fugitives was to be seen.

"What if we have overshot them?" said Victor.

"Impossible," answered Ian, "the shore is too open for that, and I have been keeping a sharp look-out at every bend and bay."

"That may be true, yet Petawanaquat may have kept a sharper look-out, and concealed himself when he saw us coming. See, here is a creek. He may have gone up that. Let us try. Why! there *is* a canoe in it. Hup! drive along, Ian!"

The canoe seemed to leap out of the water under the double impulse, and next moment almost ran down another canoe which was half hidden among the reeds. In it sat an old Indian named Peegwish, and a lively young French half-breed named Michel Rollin. They were both well known to our adventurers; old Peegwish —whose chief characteristic was owlishness—being a frequent and welcome visitor at the house of Ian's father.

"You 'pears to be in one grand hurray," exclaimed Rollin, in his broken English.

Ian at once told the cause of their appearance there, and asked if they had seen anything of Petawanaquat.

"Yes, oui, no—dat is to say. Look 'ere!"

Rollin pushed the reeds aside with his paddle, and pointed to a canoe lying bottom up, as if it had been concealed there.

"Ve's be come 'ere after duck, an' ve find dat," said the half-breed.

An immediate investigation showed that Petawanaquat had forsaken his canoe and taken to the woods. Ian looked troubled. Peegwish opened his owlish eyes and looked so solemn that Victor could scarce forbear laughing, despite the circumstances. It was immediately resolved to give chase. Peegwish was left in charge of the canoes. The other three soon found the track of the Red Man and

followed it up like bloodhounds. At first they had no difficulty in following the trail, being almost as expert as Indians in woodcraft, but soon they came to swampy ground, and then to stony places, in which they utterly lost it. Again and again did they go back to pick up the lost trail, and follow it only to lose it again.

Thus they spent the remainder of that day until night put a stop to their exertions and crushed their hopes. Then, dispirited and weary, they returned to the canoes and encamped beside them.

Peegwish was engaged in roasting a duck when they arrived.

"What a difference between the evening and the morning," said Victor, as he flung himself down beside the fire.

"Dat is troo, an' vat I has obsarve oftin," said Rollin, looking earnestly into a kettle which rested on the fire.

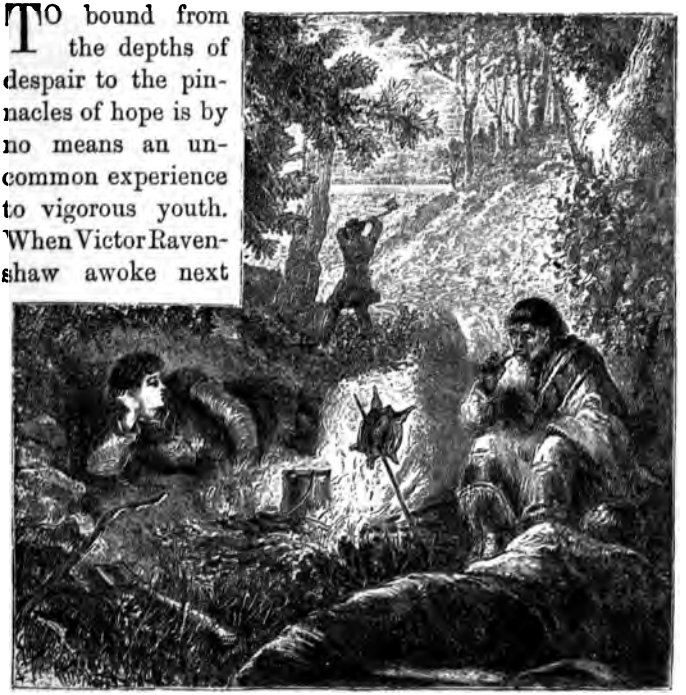
"Never mind, Vic," said Ian heartily, "we 'll be at it again to-morrow, bright and early. We 're sure to succeed in the long-run. Petawanaquat can't travel at night in the woods any more than we can."

Old Peegwish glared at the fire as though he were pondering these sayings deeply. As he understood little or no English, however, it is more probable that his astute mind was concentrated on the roasting duck.

CHAPTER IV.

A DISCOVERY—THE CHASE CONTINUED ON FOOT.

TO bound from the depths of despair to the pinnacles of hope is by no means an uncommon experience to vigorous youth. When Victor Ravenshaw awoke next



THE ENCAMPMENT.—PREPARING BREAKFAST.

morning after a profound and refreshing sleep, and looked up through the branches at the bright sky, despondency fled, and he felt ready for anything. He was early awake, but Peegwish had evidently been up long before him, for that wrinkled old savage had kindled the fire, and was seated on the other side of it wrapped in his blanket, smoking, and watching the preparation of breakfast. When Victor contemplated his solemn eyes glaring at a roasting duck, which suggested the idea that he had been sitting there and glaring all night, he burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

"Come, I say, Vic," said Ian, roused by this from a comfortable nap, "if you were a hyena there might be some excuse for you, but being only a man—forgive me, a boy—you ought to have more sense than to disturb your friends so."

"Oui, yes; dat is troo. Vraiment, it is too bad," growled Rollin, sitting up and stretching himself. "Howsomewhatever, it is time to rise. Oui!"

"I should think it was," retorted Victor; "the sun is already up, and you may be sure that Petawanaquat has tramped some miles this morning. Come, Peegwish, close your eyes a bit for fear they jump out. What have you got to give us, eh? Robbiboo, ducks, and—no, is it tea? Well, we *are* in luck to have fallen in with you."

He rested his head on his hand, and lay looking at the savage with a pleased expression, while Rollin rose and went off to cut more firewood.

The robbiboo referred to was a sort of thick soup made of pemmican boiled with flour. Without loss of time the party applied themselves to it. When appetite was partially appeased Ian propounded the question, What was to be done?

"Follow up the trail as fast as we can," said Victor promptly.

"Dat is bon advise," observed Rollin. "Hand over de duck, Peegvish, an' do try for shut your eyes. If you vould only vink it vould seem more comfortabler."

Peegwish did not smile, but with deepened gravity passed the duck.

"I'm not so sure of the goodness of the advice," said Ian. "To go scampering into the woods on a chase that may lead us we know not where or how long, with only a small quantity of provisions and ammunition, and but one gun, may seem energetic and daring, but it may not, perhaps, be wise."

Victor admitted that there was truth in that, and looked perplexed.

"Nevertheless, to give up at this point, and return to the settlement for supplies," he said, "would be to lose the advantage of our quick start. How are we to get over the difficulty?"

"Moi, I can you git out of de difficulty," said Rollin, lighting his pipe with a business air. "Dis be de vay. Peegvish et me is out for long hunt vid much pemmican, poodre an' shote. You make von 'greement vid me et Peegvish. You vill engage me; I vill go vid you. You can take vat you vill of our tings, and send Peegvish back to de settlement for tell fat ve bees do."

This plan, after brief but earnest consideration, was adopted. The old Indian returned to Willow Creek with pencil notes, written on birch bark, to old Samuel Ravenshaw and Angus Macdonald, and the other three of the party set off at once to renew the chase on foot, with blankets and food strapped to their backs and guns on their shoulders—for Rollin carried his own fowling-piece, and Victor had borrowed that of Peegwish.

As happened the previous day, they failed several times to find the trail of the fugitives, but at last Ian discovered it, and they pushed forward with renewed hope. The faint footmarks at first led them deep into the woods, where it was difficult to force a passage; then the trail disappeared altogether on the banks of a little stream. But the pursuers were too experienced to be thrown off the scent by such a well-known device as walking up stream in the water. They followed the brook until they came to the place where Petawanaquat had once more betaken himself to dry land. It was a well-chosen spot; hard and rocky ground, on which only slight impressions could be left, and the wily savage had taken care to step so as to leave as slight a trail as possible; but the pursuers had sharp and trained eyes. Ian Macdonald, in particular, having spent much of his time as a hunter before setting up his school, had the eyes of a lynx. He could distinguish marks when his companions could see nothing until they were pointed out, and although frequently at fault, he never failed to recover the trail sooner or later.

Of course they lost much time, and they knew that Petawanaquat must be rapidly increasing the distance between them, but they trusted to his travelling more leisurely when he felt secure from pursuit, and to his being delayed somewhat by Tony, whom it was obvious he had carried for long distances at a stretch.

For several days the pursuers went on with unflagging perseverance and ever-increasing hope, until they at last emerged from the woods, and began to traverse the great prairie. Here the trail diverged for a considerable distance southward, and then turned sharply to the west, in which direction it went in a straight line for many miles, as if Petawanaquat had made up his mind to cross the

Rocky Mountains, and throw poor Tony into the Pacific!

The travellers saw plenty of game—ducks, geese, plover, prairie-hens, antelopes, etc.—on the march, but they were too eager in the pursuit of the savage to be turned aside by smaller game. They merely shot a few ducks to save their pemmican. At last they came to a point in the prairie which occasioned them great perplexity of mind and depression of spirit.

It was on the evening of a bright and beautiful day—one of those days in which the air seems fresher and the sky bluer, and the sun more brilliant than usual. They had found, that evening, that the trail led them away to the right towards one of the numerous clumps of woodland which rendered that part of the prairie more like a nobleman's park than a wild wilderness.

On entering the bushes they perceived that there was a lakelet embosomed like a gem in the surrounding trees. Passing through the belt of woodland they stood on the margin of the little lake.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Ian, with a flush of pleasure on his sunburnt face. "Just like a bit of Paradise."

"Did you ever see Paradise, that you know so well what it is like?" asked Victor of his unromantic friend.

"Yes, Vic, I've seen it many a time—in imagination."

"Indeed, and what like was it, and what sort of people were there?"

"It was like—let me see—the most glorious scene ever beheld on earth, but more exquisite, and the sun that lighted it was more brilliant by far than ours."

"Not bad, for an unromantic imagination," said Victor, with much gravity. "Were there any ducks and geese there?"

"Yes, ducks; plenty of them, but no *geese;* and nobler game—even lions were there, so tame that little children could lead them."

"Better and better," said Victor; "and what of the people?"

Ian was on the point of saying that they were all—men, women, and children—the exact counterparts of Elsie Ravenshaw, but he checked himself and said that they were all honest, sincere, kind, gentle, upright, and that there was not a single cynical person there, nor a—

"Hush! what sort of a bird is that?" interrupted Victor, laying his hand on Ian's arm and pointing to a small patch of reeds in the lake.

There were so many birds of various kinds gambolling on the surface, that Ian had difficulty in distinguishing the creature referred to. At last he perceived it, a curious fat-bodied little bird with a pair of preposterously long legs, which stood eyeing its companions as if in contemplative pity.

"I know it not," said Ian; "never saw it before."

"We'll bag it now. Stand back," said Victor, raising his gun.

The above conversation had been carried on in a low tone, for the friends were still concealed by a bush from the various and numerous birds which disported themselves on the lake in fancied security and real felicity.

The crash of Victor's gun sent them screaming over the tree-tops—all save the fat creature with the long legs, which now lay dead on the water.

"Go in for it, Rollin, it's not deep, I think," said Victor.

"Troo, but it may be dangeroose for all dat," replied the half-breed, leaning his gun against a tree. "How-somewhatever I vill try!"

The place turned out, as he had suspected, to be somewhat treacherous, with a floating bottom. Before he had waded half way to the dead bird the ground began to sink under him. Presently he threw up his arms, went right down, and disappeared.

Both Ian and Victor started forward with the intention of plunging into the water, but they had not reached the edge when Rollin reappeared, blowing like a grampus. They soon saw that he could swim, and allowed him to scramble ashore.

This misadventure did not prevent them from making further attempts to secure the bird, which Victor, having some sort of naturalistic propensities, was eager to possess. It was on going round the margin of the lake for this purpose that they came upon the cause of the perplexities before mentioned. On the other side of a point covered with thick bush they came upon the remains of a large Indian camp, which had evidently been occupied very recently. Indeed, the ashes of some of the fires, Rollin declared, were still warm; but it was probably Rollin's imagination which warmed them. It was found, too, that the trail of Petawanaquat entered this camp, and was there utterly lost in the confusion of tracks made everywhere by many feet, both large and small.

Here, then, was sufficient ground for anxiety. If the savage had joined this band and gone away with it, the pursuers could of course follow him up, but, in the event of their finding him among friends, there seemed little or no probability of their being able to rescue the stolen child. On the other hand, if Petawanaquat had left the Indians and continued his journey alone, the great difficulty that lay before them was to find his point of departure from a band which would naturally send out hunters right and left as they marched along.

"It's a blue look-out any way you take it," remarked poor Victor, with an expression worthy of Peegwish on his countenance.

"I vish it vas blue. It is black," said Rollin.

Ian replied to both remarks by saying that, whether black or blue, they must make the best of it, and set about doing that at once. To do his desponding comrades justice, they were quite ready for vigorous action in any form, notwithstanding their despair.

Accordingly, they followed the broad trail of the Indians into the prairie a short way, and, separating in different directions round its margins, carefully examined and followed up the tracks that diverged from it for considerable distances, but without discovering the print of the little moccasin with Elsie's patch, or the larger footprint of Tony's captor.

"You see, there are so many footprints, some like and some unlike, and they cross and recross each other to such an extent that it seems to me a hopeless case altogether," said Victor.

"You don't propose to give it up, do you?" asked Ian.

"Give it up!" repeated Victor, almost fiercely. "Give up Tony? NO! not as long as I can walk, or even crawl."

"Ve vill crawl before long, *per*haps," said Rollin; "ve may even stop crawling an' die at last, but ve must not yet give in."

In the strength of this resolve they returned to the lakelet when the sun went down, and encamped there. It is needless to say that they supped and slept well notwithstanding—or notwithforstanding, as Rollin put it. Rollin was fond of long words, and possessed a few that were his own private property. Victor had a dream that night. He dreamt that he caught sight of an Indian on the plains with Tony on his shoulder; that he gave chase,

and almost overtook them, when, to save himself, the Indian dropped his burden; that he, Victor, seized his rescued brother in a tight embrace, and burst into tears of joy; that Tony suddenly turned into Petawanaquat, and that, in the sharp revulsion of feeling, he, Victor, seized the nose of the savage and pulled it out to a length of three yards, twisted it round his neck and choked him, thrust his head down into his chest and tied his arms in a knot over it, and, finally, stuffing him into a mud-puddle, jumped upon him and stamped him down. It was an absurd dream, no doubt, but are not dreams generally absurd?

While engaged in the last mentioned humane operation, Victor was awakened by Ian.

"It's time to be moving," said his comrade with a laugh. "I would have roused you before, but you seemed to be so busily engaged with some friend that I hadn't the heart to part you sooner."

The whole of that day they spent in a fruitless effort to detect the footprints of Petawanaquat, either among the tracks made by the band of Indians or among those diverging from the main line of march. In so doing they wandered far from the camp at the lakelet, and even lost sight of each other. The only result was that Ian and Rollin returned in the evening dispirited and weary, and Victor lost himself.

The ease with which this is done is scarcely comprehensible by those who have not wandered over an unfamiliar and boundless plain, on which the clumps of trees and shrubs have no very distinctive features.

Victor's comrades, however, were alive to the danger. Not finding him in camp, they at once went out in different directions, fired shots until they heard his answering reply, and at last brought him safely in.

That night again they spent on the margin of the little lake, and over the camp-fire discussed their future plans. It was finally assumed that Petawanaquat had joined the Indians, and resolved that they should follow up the trail as fast as they could travel.

This they did during many days without, however, overtaking the Indians. Then the pemmican began to wax low, for in their anxiety to push on they neglected to hunt. At last, one evening, just as it was growing dark, and while they were looking out for a convenient resting-place, they came on the spot where the Indians had encamped, evidently the night before, for the embers of their fires were still smoking.

Here, then, they lay down with the pleasing hope, not unmingled with anxiety, that they should overtake the band on the following day.

CHAPTER V.

TONY BECOMES A REDSKIN, AND THE PURSUERS CHANGE THEIR GAME.

WHEN Petawanaquat joined the band of Indians, of whom we left Victor Ravenshaw and his comrades in eager pursuit, he deemed it advisable for various reasons to alter the costume and general appearance of his captive, and for that purpose took him to a sequestered spot in the bushes outside the camp.

Poor Tony had at first shrunk from his captor with inexpressible horror, but when he found that the Indian did not eat him his mind was calmed. As time advanced, and he perceived that Petawanaquat, although stern and very silent, took much pains to assist him on his long marches, and, above all, fed him with a liberal hand, his feelings changed considerably, and at last he began to regard the taciturn red man with something like fondness. Petawanaquat made no positive effort to gain the child's affections; he never fondled him, and seldom spoke, save for the purpose of giving a brief command, which Tony always obeyed with miraculous promptitude. The utmost that can be said is that the savage was gentle and supplied his wants. Could a civilised man have done much more?

It may be well to remark in passing that Tony, having associated a good deal with Indian boys in Red River, could speak their language pretty well. The Indian, of

course, spoke his own tongue correctly, while Tony spoke it much as he spoke his own—childishly. As the reader probably does not understand the Indian language, we will give its equivalent as spoken by both in English.

On reaching the sequestered spot above referred to, Petawanaquat sat down on a fallen tree and made the wondering child stand up before him.

"The white man's boy must become an Indian," he said solemnly.

"How zat poss'ble?" demanded the child with equal solemnity.

"By wearing the red man's clothes and painting his face," returned his captor.

"Zat 'll be jolly," said Tony, with a smile of hearty approval.

How he expressed the word "jolly" in the Indian tongue we cannot tell, but he conveyed it somehow, for the Indian's lips expanded in a grim smile, the first he had indulged in since the day of the abduction.

The process by which Tony was transformed was peculiar. Opening a little bundle, the Indian took therefrom a small coat, or capote, of deer-skin; soft, and of a beautiful yellow, like the skin of the chamois. It was richly ornamented with porcupine-quill work done in various colours, and had fringes of leather and little locks of hair hanging from it in various places. Causing Tony to strip, he put this coat on him, and fastened it round his waist with a worsted belt of bright scarlet. Next he drew on his little legs a pair of blue cloth leggings, which were ornamented with beads, and clothed his feet in new moccasins, embroidered, like the coat, with quill-work. Tony regarded all this with unconcealed pleasure, but it did not seem to please him so much when the Indian combed his rich curly hair straight down all round, so

that his face was quite concealed by it. Taking a pair of large scissors from his bundle, the Indian passed one blade under the hair across the forehead, gave a sharp snip, and the whole mass fell like a curtain to the ground. It was a sublimely simple mode of clearing the way for the countenance—much in vogue among North American savages, from whom it has recently been introduced among civilised nations. The Indian then lifted the clustering curls at the back, and again opened the scissors. For a few moments his fingers played with the locks as he gazed thoughtfully at them; then, apparently changing his mind, he let them drop, and put the scissors away.

But the toilet was not yet complete. The versatile operator drew from his bundle some bright-red, yellow ochre, and blue paint, with a piece of charcoal, and set to work on Tony's countenance with all the force of a Van Dyck and the rich colouring of a Rubens. He began with a streak of scarlet from the eyebrows to the end of the nose. Skipping the mouth, he continued the streak from the lower lip down the chin, under which it melted into a tender half-tint made by a smudge of yellow ochre and charcoal. This vigorous touch seemed to rouse the painter's spirit in Petawanaquat, for he pushed the boy out at arm's length, drew himself back, frowned, glared, and breathed hard. Three bars of blue from the bridge of the nose over each cheek, with two red circles below, and a black triangle on the forehead, were touched in with consummate skill and breadth. One of the touches was so broad that it covered the whole jaw, and had to be modified. On each closed upper eyelid an intensely black spot was painted, by which simple device Tony, with his azure orbs, was made, as it were, to wink black and gaze blue. The general effect having thus been blocked in, the artist devoted himself to the finishing



TONY IS CHANGED IN APPEARANCE.

touches, and at last turned out a piece of work which old Samuel Ravenshaw himself would have failed to recognise as his son.

It should have been remarked that previous to this, Petawanaquat had modified his own costume. His leggings were fringed with scalp-locks; he had painted his face, and stuck a bunch of feathers in his hair, and a gay firebag and a tomahawk were thrust under his belt behind.

"Ho!" he exclaimed, with a look of satisfaction, "now Tony is Tonyquat, and Petawanaquat is his father!"

"When will zoo take me back to my own fadder?" asked Tony, emboldened by the Indian's growing familiarity.

No reply was given to this, but the question seemed to throw the red man into a savage reverie, and a dark frown settled on his painted face, as he muttered, "The Little Wolf meant to take the white man's life, but he was wise: he spared his life and took his *heart*. His revenge is sweeter. Wah!"

Tony failed to catch the meaning of this, but fearing to rouse the anger of his new father, he held his tongue. Meanwhile the Indian put the child on a stump a few yards off in front of him, filled his pipe, lighted it, placed an elbow on each knee, rested his chin on his doubled fists, and glared at his handiwork. Tony was used to glaring by that time, though he did not like it. He sat still for a long time like one fascinated, and returned the stare with interest.

At last the Indian spoke.

"Is Tonyquat a Christian?"

Somewhat surprised but not perplexed by the question Tony answered "Ho, yis," promptly.

The Indian again looked long and earnestly at the

child, as if he were considering how far such a juvenile mind might be capable of going into a theological discussion.

"What *is* a Christian?" asked the Indian abruptly.

"A Kistn's a dood boy," replied Tony; then, dropping his eyes for a moment in an effort to recall past lessons, he suddenly looked up with an intelligent smile, and said, "Oh, yis, I 'memers now. Elsie teach me a Kis'n boy's one what tries to be like de Lord—dood, kind, gentle, fo'givin', patient, an' heaps more; zat's what a Kist'n is."

The Indian nodded approvingly. This accorded, as far as it went, with what he had learned from the missionaries of Red River, but his mind was evidently perplexed. He smoked, meditated a considerable time, and glared at Tony in silence; then said suddenly—

"Tonyquat, your father is *not* a Christian."

"My fadder would knock zoo down if zoo say dat to hims face," replied the child confidently.

This seemed so palpable a truth that the Indian nodded several times, and grinned fiendishly.

"Do Christians swear, an' drink, and fight, and get angry till the blood makes the face blue, and strike with the fist?" asked Petawanaquat.

"Oh, no—*never*," replied Tony, adopting that shocked tone and look which Elsie was in the habit of using when anything wicked was propounded to her; "dey's always dood, like Josuf an' Abel an' Sam'l, an' Cain, an' David, an' Saul—"

Tony stopped short, with an indistinct idea that he was mixing pattern characters.

"Ho!" muttered the savage, with a gleam of triumph in his eyes, "Petawanaquat has got his *heart*."

"Eh, zoo got 'im by heart a'ready? Took me long,

long time to git 'em by heart," said Tony, with a look of admiration, which was sadly marred by the paint. "Me 's not got 'em all off yet. But you 's clever, an'—an'—big."

The Indian's smile became a sad one, and his look was again perplexed, as he rose and returned to the camp, followed by his adopted son. It was obvious that no light was to be thrown on his religious difficulties, whatever they were, by Tonyquat.

After leaving the lakelet on the plains, the Indian travelled for several days with his friends; and then parting from them, went towards the west, to rejoin his family. This point of divergence the pursuers had missed, and when they overtook the Indian band, they found, to their intense regret, that the kidnapper had escaped them.

"We will hold on with the redskins," said Ian Macdonald, while sitting in council with his companions after this discovery. "The chief tells me that buffaloes have been reported in a spot which lies in the direction we must follow to recover the trail. This advantage we now possess, however: we know where Petawanaquat is going —thanks to his so-called friends here, who don't seem to care much about him—and as he believes he has distanced all pursuers, he will now journey slower than before. Besides, we must help to kill a buffalo or two, our meat being nearly done. What say you, Vic?"

"I say what you say, of course, though I 'd rather set off ahead of the band, and push on as fast as we can."

"Vich means dat youth bees impetoous toujours," said Rollin.

In pursuance of this plan they journeyed with the Indians for three days, when an event occurred which

modified their plans considerably. This was the discovery one afternoon of a broad trail, made by the passage of numerous carts and horsemen over the prairie.

"Buffalo-runners!" exclaimed Rollin, when they came upon the track.

"From Red River!" cried Victor.

"Even so, boys," said Ian.

The Indian chief, who led the party, held the same opinion, and added that they were evidently journeying in the same direction with themselves. This rendered it necessary that they should make a forced march during the night, it being otherwise impossible for men on foot to overtake a party of horsemen. Towards midnight of the same day they had the satisfaction of seeing their camp-fires in the distance. Soon afterwards they were within the circle of the camp, where men were still smoking and eating round the fires, and women and children were moving busily about.

"Why, there are John Flett and David Mowat," exclaimed Victor, as several of the men came forward to meet the party.

"An' Hayes, an' Vinklemann," cried Rollin.

Another minute and they were shaking hands amid a chorus of surprised and hearty questions and replies.

"Is Louis Lambert with you?" asked Victor, after mutual explanations had been given.

"No," said David Mowat, with a laugh, "he's got other fish to fry at home."

Poor Ian winced, for he at once pictured to himself Elsie as the mermaid hinted at.

"Now, boys, I'm going to ask some of you to make a sacrifice," said Ian. "We had intended to follow up this chase on foot, but of course will be able to accomplish our end sooner on horseback. I want three of you to

lend us your horses. You 're sure to be well paid for them by Sam Ravenshaw and my father. I 'll guarantee you that—"

"We want no guarantee," interrupted John Flett, "and we have spare horses enough in the camp to mount you without giving up our own; so make your mind easy."

"Zat is troo," said Herr Winklemann; "ve has goot horse to spare; buff'lo-runners every von. Bot you mus' stay vid us von day for run ze buff'lo an' git supply of meat."

Victor and his friends at once agreed to this, all the more readily that the possession of horses would now enable them easily to overtake the fugitives. Accordingly, they sat down to a splendid supper of robbiboo, and continued to eat, chat, and quaff tea far into the following morning, until nature asserted herself by shutting up their eyelids.

The band with which our adventurers were now associated was composed of a motley crew of Red River half-breeds, out for the great spring buffalo hunt. It consisted of nearly 700 hunters, as many women, more than 400 children, and upwards of 1000 carts, with horses and draught oxen, besides about 700 buffalo-runners, or trained hunting-horses, and more than 500 dogs. These latter, although useless in the spring hunt, were, nevertheless, taken with them, fed, and cared for, because of their valuable qualities as draught animals for light sledges in winter.

Some of the hunters were steady-going and respectable enough; others were idle, thriftless fellows, who could not settle to farming in the colony, and even in the chase were lazy, bad hunters. The women were there for the purpose of attending to camp duties—cooking, dressing the buffalo skins, making bags from the animals' green

hides, with the hair left on the outside, and filling the same with pemmican.

This substance, as we have elsewhere remarked, is by no means unpalatable; it is very nutritious, and forms the chief food of the hundreds of voyageurs who traverse Rupert's Land in boats and canoes during the open season of the year. It must be understood, however, that the compost is not attractive in appearance. It is made in the open air by women who are not very particular in their habits. Hence, during windy weather, a modicum of dust is introduced into it. Even stray leaves and twigs may get into it at times, and it is always seasoned more or less profusely with buffalo hairs. But these are trifles to strong and hungry men.

Two trips to the plains were made annually by these hunters. The proceeds of the spring hunt were always sold to supply them with needed clothing, ammunition, etc., for the year. The "fall or autumn hunt" furnished them with their winter stock of food, and helped to pay off their debts, most of them being supplied on credit. Sometimes the fall hunt failed, in which case starvation stared the improvident among them in the face, and suffering, more or less severe, was the lot of all.

Little, however, did the reckless, jovial half-breeds care for such considerations on the occasion about which we write. It was the spring hunt. The year was before them. Health rolled in the veins and hope revelled in the breasts of all as they mounted their steeds, and sallied forth to the chase.

Ah! it was a memorable day for Victor, when, at early dawn, he vaulted into the saddle of the horse lent to him, and went off to hunt the buffalo.

The said horse began by standing straight up on its hind legs like a man! Victor held on by the mane.

Reversing the process, it pointed its tail to the sky. Victor stood in the stirrups. It swerved to the right, it swerved to the left, but Victor swerved with it accommodatingly. He was a splendid horseman. Finding that out at last, the steed took the bit in its teeth and ran away. Victor let it run—nay, he whacked its sides and *made* it run. Dozens of wild fellows were curveting and racing around him. It was his *first* hunt. Mad with excitement, he finally swept away from his comrades with a series of war-whoops that would have done credit to the fiercest redskin on the North American plains.

CHAPTER VI.

DESCRIBES A GREAT HUNT.

THE huge bison, or buffalo, of the North American prairie is gregarious; in other words, it loves society and travels in herds. These herds are sometimes so vast as absolutely to blacken the plains for miles around.

The half-breed buffalo-hunters of Red River were also gregarious. From the moment of their quitting the settlements they kept together for mutual help and protection. Although a free, wild, and lawless set, they found it absolutely necessary for hunting purposes to organise themselves, and thus by voluntary submission to restraint, unwittingly did homage to Law! On a level plain at a place called Pembina, three days out from Red River, the whole camp squatted down; the roll was called, and rules and regulations for the journey were agreed upon and settled. Then ten captains were named, the senior being Baptiste Warder, an English half-breed, a fine bold-looking and discreet man of resolute character, who was thus elected the great war chief of the little army. As commander-in-chief Baptiste had various duties to perform, among others to see that lost property picked up about the camp should be restored to its owner through the medium of a public crier, who went his rounds every evening. Each captain had ten stout fellows under him to act as soldiers or policemen. Ten

guides were also appointed, each of whom led the camp day about and carried its flag or standard. The hoisting of the flag each morning was the signal for raising the camp. Half an hour was the time allowed to get ready, unless, any one being sick or animals having strayed, delay became necessary. All day the flag remained up; its being lowered each evening was the signal for encamping. Then the captains and their men arranged the order of the camp. The carts as they arrived moved to their appointed places, side by side, with the trams outwards, and formed a circle, inside of which, at one end, the tents were pitched in double and triple rows, the horses, etc., being tethered at the other end. Thus they were at all times ready to resist attack from Indians.

Among other rules laid down on this occasion at starting were the following:—No hunting to be allowed on the Sabbath day. No party to fork off, lag behind, or go before, without permission. No hunter or party to run buffalo before the general order, and every captain in turn to mount guard with his men and patrol the camp. The punishments for offenders were, like themselves, rather wild and wasteful. For a first offence against the laws, a culprit was to have his saddle and bridle cut up! For the second, his coat to be taken and cut up; and for the third he was to be flogged. A person convicted of theft was to be brought to the middle of the camp, and have his or her name loudly proclaimed three times, with the word "thief" added each time.

It was the third week out from the settlement when the hunters met with Victor Ravenshaw and his friends, yet up to that day they had failed to find the buffalo, and were well-nigh starving. The intelligence, therefore, that scouts had at length discovered game, had filled the camp with joy.

After having taken a little of the mettle out of his steed, as related in the last chapter, Victor caused him to make a wide circuit on the plain, and came up behind the line of hunters just as they topped a prairie undulation, or wave, and sighted the buffalo. It was a grand array, the sight of which thrilled the young sportsman to the heart. Full four hundred huntsmen, mounted on fresh and restive steeds, were slowly advancing, waiting eagerly for the word to start. Baptiste Warder, their chief, was in front with his telescope, surveying the game and the ground. Victor pushed in between Ian and Rollin, who rode near the centre of the impatient line. The wild cattle blackened the plain at the distance of about a mile and a half from them.

"Surely they must have seen us by this time," said Victor, in a voice of suppressed agitation.

"Have you got your powder-horn and bullets handy?" asked Ian.

"Yes; all right."

"Put im in de mout, de mout," said Rollin quickly.

The half-breed here referred to a habit of the hunters, who carry several bullets in their mouths to facilitate loading while running at full speed. The method is simple. The hunter merely pours powder into his left palm, transfers it to his gun, drops a bullet from his mouth into the muzzle, hits the butt smartly on his pommel, which at once sends the charge home and forces priming into the pan, and thus is ready for another shot.

Victor, having forgotten all about this, immediately put three bullets into his mouth, his gun being already loaded.

"Don't swallow them!" said Ian.

"Swallow your own advice," growled Victor.

"Start!" shouted Captain Warder.

The welcome signal sent an electric thrill along the line. It was promptly obeyed, first at a slow trot, then at a hard gallop. The low rumbling thunder of their tramp was in keeping with the wild eager looks of the half-savage hunters. They had approached to within four or five hundred yards before the buffalo-bulls curved their tails into marks of interrogation and began to paw the ground. Another moment, and the mighty herd took to flight. Then the huntsmen let loose their eager steeds. As squadrons of dragoons charge into the thick of battle, these wild fellows bore down with grand momentum on the buffalo bands. The very earth seemed to tremble when they charged, but when the herd sprang away in the frenzy of terror it was as though a shock of earthquake had riven the plains. Right into the careering mass the horsemen rushed. Shots began—here, there, and everywhere, until a rattle of musketry filled the air, while smoke, dust, shouts, and bellowing added to the wild confusion. The fattest animals were selected, and in an incredibly short space of time a thousand of their carcasses strewed the plain.

The men who were best mounted of course darted forward in advance and secured the fattest cows. They seldom dropped a mark to identify their property. These hunters possess a power of distinguishing the animals they have slain during a hot and long ride, which amounts almost to an instinct—even though they may have killed from ten to twelve animals. An experienced hunter on a good horse will perform such a feat during one race. He seldom fires till within three or four yards of his prey, and never misses. A well-trained horse, the moment it hears the shot, springs on one side to avoid stumbling over the buffalo. An awkward or shy horse will not approach nearer than ten or fifteen yards. Badly-

mounted men think themselves well off if they secure two or three animals during one run.

As the battle continued, the very air was darkened with dust and smoke. Of course such a fight could not rage without casualties. There were, in truth, many hair-breadth and some almost miraculous escapes, for the ground was rocky and full of badger-holes. Twenty-three horses and riders were seen at one moment all sprawling on the ground. One horse was gored by a bull and killed on the spot: two other horses fell over it and were disabled. One rider broke his shoulder-blade, another burst his gun by careless loading, and lost three fingers, while another was struck on the knee by a spent ball. The wonder was, not that so many, but that so few, were hurt, when it is considered that the riders were dashing about in clouds of dust and smoke, crossing and recrossing each other in all directions, with shots firing right and left, before, behind —everywhere—in quick succession. The explanation must be that, every man being a trained marksman, nearly every bullet found its billet in a buffalo's body.

With his heart in his mouth, as well as his bullets, Victor Ravenshaw entered into the wild *mêlée*, scarce knowing what he was about. Although inexperienced, he knew well what to do, for many a time had he listened to the stories of buffalo hunters in times past, and had put all their operations in practice with a wooden gun in mimic chase. But it was not easy to keep cool. He saw a fat animal just ahead of him, pushed close alongside; pointed his gun without raising it to his shoulder, and fired. He almost burnt the animal's hair, so near was he. The buffalo fell and his horse leaped to one side. Victor had forgotten this part of the programme. He was nearly unseated, but held on by the mane and recovered his seat.

Immediately he poured powder into his palm—spilling

a good deal and nearly dropping his gun from under his left arm in the operation—and commenced to reload while at full speed. He spat a ball into the muzzle, just missed knocking out some of his front teeth, forgot to strike the butt on the pommel of the saddle (which omission would have infallibly resulted in the bursting of the gun had it exploded), pointed at another animal and drew the trigger. It missed fire, of course, for want of priming. He remembered his error; corrected it, pointed again, fired, and dropped another cow.

Elated with success, he was about to reload when a panting bull came up behind him. He seized his bridle, and swerved a little. The bull thundered on, mad with rage; its tail aloft, and pursued by Michel Rollin, who seemed as angry as the bull.

"Hah! I vill stop you!" growled the excited half-breed as he dashed along.

Animals were so numerous and close around them that they seemed in danger, at the moment, of being crushed. Suddenly the bull turned sharp round on its pursuer. To avoid it the horse leaped on one side; the girths gave way, and the rider, saddle and all, were thrown on the bull's horns. With a wild toss of its head, the surprised creature sent the man high into the air. In his fall he alighted on the back of another buffalo—it was scarcely possible to avoid this in the crowd—and slipped to the ground. Strange to say, Rollin was not hurt, but he was effectually thrown out of the running for that time, and Victor saw him no more till evening. We relate no fanciful or exaggerated tale, good reader. Our description is in strict accordance with the account of a credible eye-witness.

For upwards of an hour and a half the wild chase was kept up; the plain was strewn with the dead and dying, and

horsemen as well as buffaloes were scattered far and wide.

Victor suddenly came upon Ian while in pursuit of an animal.

"What luck!" he shouted.

"I've killed two—by accident, I think," said Ian, swerving towards his comrade, but not slackening his pace.

"Capital! I've killed three. Who's that big fellow ahead after the old bull?"

"It's Winklemann. He seems to prefer tough meat."

As Ian spoke the bull in question turned suddenly round, just as Rollin's bull had done, and received Winklemann's horse on its hairy forehead. The poor man shot from the saddle as if he had been thrown from a catapult, turned a complete somersault over the buffalo, and fell on his back beyond. Thrusting the horse to one side, the buffalo turned and seemed to gore the prostrate German as it dashed onward.

Pulling up at once, both Victor and Ian leaped from their horses and hastened to assist their friend. He rose slowly to a sitting posture as they approached, and began to feel his legs with a troubled look.

"Not much hurt, I hope?" said Ian, kneeling beside him. "No bones broken?"

"No, I think not; mine leks are fery vell, but I fear mine lunks are gone," answered the German, untying his belt.

It was found, however, on examination, that the lungs were all right, the bull's horn having merely grazed the poor man's ribs. In a few minutes his horse was caught, and he was able to remount, but the trio were now far behind the tide of war, which had swept away by that time to the horizon. They therefore determined to rest

content with what they had accomplished and return to camp.

"What a glorious chase!" exclaimed Victor as they rode slowly back; "I almost wish that white men might have the redskin's heaven and hunt the buffalo for ever."

"You'd soon grow tired of your heaven," said Ian, laughing. "I suspect that the soul requires occupation of a higher kind than the pursuing and slaying of wild animals."

"No doubt you are right, you learned philosopher; but you can't deny that this has been a most enjoyable burst."

"I don't deny anything. I merely controvert your idea that it would be pleasant to go on with this sort of thing for ever."

"Hah! de more so, ven your back is almost broke and your lunks are goréd."

"But your 'lunks' are not 'goréd,'" said Victor. "Come, Winklemann, be thankful that you are alive. —By the way, Ian, where are the animals you killed?"

"We are just coming to one. Here it is. I threw my cap down to mark it, and there is another one, a quarter of a mile behind it. We have plenty of meat, you see, and shall be able to quit the camp to-morrow."

While the friends were thus jogging onwards, the hunt came to an end, and the hunters, throwing off their coats and turning up their sleeves, drew their scalping-knives, and began the work of skinning and cutting up the animals. While thus engaged their guns and bridles lay handy beside them, for at such times their Indian enemies are apt to pounce on and scalp some of them, should they chance to be in the neighbourhood. At the same time the carts advanced and began to load with meat and marrow-bones. The utmost expedition was used, for all the meat that they should be obliged to leave on the field

when night closed in would be lost to them and become the property of the wolves. We know not what the loss amounted to on this occasion. But the gain was eminently satisfactory, no fewer than 1375 tongues (as tit-bits and trophies) being brought into camp.

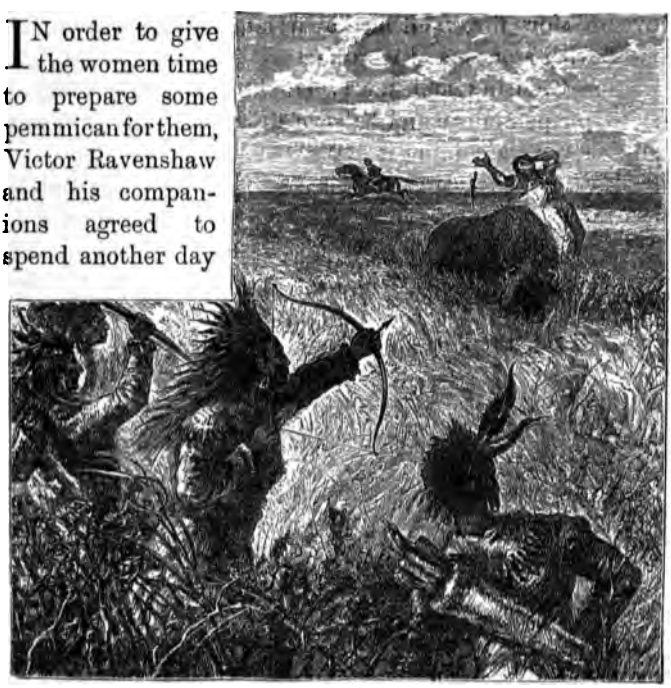
Is it to be wondered at that there were sounds of rejoicing that night round the blazing camp-fires? Need we remark that the hissing of juicy steaks sounded like a sweet lullaby far on into the night; that the contents of marrow-bones oiled the fingers, to say nothing of the mouths, cheeks, and noses, of man, woman, and child? Is it surprising that people who had been on short allowance for a considerable time past took advantage of the occasion and ate till they could hardly stand?

Truly they made a night of it. Their Indian visitors, who constituted themselves camp-followers, gorged themselves to perfect satisfaction, and even the dogs, who had a full allowance, licked their lips that night with inexpressible felicity.

CHAPTER VII.

SOME OF THE SHADOWS OF A BUFFALO-HUNTER'S LIFE.

IN order to give the women time to prepare some pemmican for them, Victor Ravenshaw and his companions agreed to spend another day



"HE FELL PIERCED BY A SHOWER OF ARROWS."—Page 67.

with the hunters, and again, as a matter of course, followed them to the chase.

The same wild pursuit, accompanied by accidents, serious and serio-comic, took place, and success again attended the hunt, but the day did not end so happily, owing to an event which filled the camp with great anxiety. It happened at the close of the day.

The men were dropping into camp by twos and threes, wearied with hard work, more or less covered with dust and blood, and laden with buffalo tongues. Carts, also, were constantly coming in, filled with meat. The women were busy cutting up and drying the meat in the sun, or over a slow fire, melting down fat, pounding the dried meat with stones, and manufacturing bags out of the raw hides. Chatting and merry laughter resounded on all sides, for pemmican and bales of dried meat meant money, and they were coining it fast.

Towards sunset a band of several hunters appeared on the ridge in front of the camp, and came careering gaily towards it. Baptiste Warder, the mighty captain, led. Victor, Ian, Rollin, Winklemann, Flett, Mowat, and others followed. They dashed into camp like a whirlwind, and sprang from their steeds, evidently well pleased with the success of the day.

"Had splendid sport," said Victor, with glittering eyes, to one of the subordinate captains, who addressed him. "I killed ten animals myself, and Ian Macdonald missed fifteen; Winklemann dropped six, besides dropping himself—"

"Vat is dat you zay?" demanded the big German, who was divesting himself of some of the accoutrements of the chase.

"I say that you tumbled over six buffaloes and then tumbled over yourself," said Victor, laughing.

"Zat is not troo. It vas mine horse vat tombled. Of course I could not go on riding upon noting after mine horse vas down."

At supper Herr Winklemann was quieter than usual, and rather cross. His propensity to tumble seemed to be a sore subject with him, both as to body and mind. He made more than one cutting remark to Victor during the meal. After supper pipes were of course lighted, and conversation flowed freely. The only two who did not smoke were Ian Macdonald and, strange to say, Winklemann. That worthy German was a brilliant exception to his countrymen in the matter of tobacco. Victor, under the influence of example, was attempting in a quiet way to acquire the art, but with little success. He took to the pipe awkwardly.

"Vat vor you smok?" asked Winklemann, in a tone of contempt to Victor. "It is clear zat you do not loike it."

"How d'you know that I don't like it?" asked Victor, with a blush and a laugh.

"Becowse your face do show it. Ve does not make faces at vat ve loikes."

"That may be," retorted Victor, somewhat sharply. "Nevertheless, I have earned a hunter's right to enjoy my pipe as well as the rest of you."

"Bon, bon, c'est vrai—true," cried Rollin, letting a huge cloud escape from his lips.

"Bah! doos killing buffalo give you right to do voolishness? Do not try for deceive yourself. You loike it not, bot you tink it makes you look loike a *man*. Zat is vat you tink. Nevair vas you more mistooken. I have seen von leetle poy put on a pair of big boots and tink he look very grand, very loike him fadder; bot de boots only makes him look smaller dan before, an' more foolish. So it is vid de pipe in de mout of de beardless poy."

Having thrown this apple of discord into the midst of the party, Winklemann shut his mouth firmly, as if waiting for a belligerent reply. As for Victor, he flushed again, partly from indignation at this attack on his liberty to do as he pleased, and partly from shame at having the real motive of his heart so ruthlessly exposed. Victor was too honest and manly to deny the fact that he had not yet acquired a liking for tobacco, and admitted to himself that, in very truth, his object in smoking was to appear, as he imagined, more like a man, forgetful or ignorant of the fact that men (even smokers) regard beardless consumers of tobacco as poor imitative monkeys. He soon came to see the habit in its true light, and gave it up, luckily, before he became its slave. He would have been more than mortal, however, had he given in at once. Continuing, therefore, to puff with obstinate vigour, he returned to the charge.

"Smoking is no worse than drinking, Winklemann, and you know that you're fond of beer."

"Bon!" said Rollin, nodding approval.

"Vat then?" cried the German, who never declined a challenge of any kind, and who was fond of wordy war; "doos my sin joostify yours? Bot you is wrong. If smoking be not worse dan trinking, it is less excusable, for to trink is natural. I may apuse mine power an' trink vat is pad for me, but den I may likewise trink vat is coot for me. Vit smoking, no; you cannot smok vat is coot; it is all pad togeder. Von chile is porn; vell, it do trink at vonce, vidout learning. Bot did any von ever hear of a chile vat cry for a pipe ven it was porn?"

The laugh with which this question was greeted was suddenly arrested by the sound of a galloping steed. Every one sprang up and instinctively seized a weapon, for the clatter of hoofs had that unmistakable character

which indicates desperate urgency. It was low and dull at first, but became suddenly and sharply distinct as a rider rose over the ridge to the left and bore madly down on the camp, lashing his horse with furious persistency.

"It's young Vallé," exclaimed Captain Baptiste, hastening to meet him.

Vallé, who was a mere youth, had gone out with his father, Louison Vallé, and the rest of the hunters in the morning. With glaring eyes, and scarce able to speak, he now reined in his trembling steed, and told the terrible news that his father had been killed by Sioux Indians. A party of half-breeds instantly mounted and dashed away over the plains, led by the poor boy on a fresh horse. On the way he told the tale more fully.

We have already said that when skinning the buffalo late in the evening, or at a distance from camp, the hunters ran considerable risk from savages, and were more or less wary in consequence. It was drawing towards sunset when Louison Vallé perceived that night would descend before he could secure the whole of the animals he had shot, and made up his mind to the sacrifice. While busily engaged on a buffalo, he sent his son, on his own horse, to a neighbouring eminence, to watch and guard against surprise. Even while the father was giving directions to the son, a party of Sioux, armed with bows and arrows, were creeping towards him, snake-like, through the long grass. These suddenly rushed upon him, and he had barely time to shout to his son, "Make for the camp!" when he fell, pierced by a shower of arrows. Of course, the savages made off at once, well knowing that pursuit was certain. The murderers were twelve in number. They made for the bush country. Meanwhile, the avengers reached the murdered man, The body was on its back, just as it had fallen. Death must have

relieved the unfortunate hunter before the scalp had been torn from his skull.

It was the first time that Victor Ravenshaw had looked upon a slain man. Many a time and oft had he read, with a thrill of interest, glowing descriptions of fights in which isolated acts of courage, or heroism, or magnanimity on the battle-field, coupled with but slight reference to the killed and wounded, had blinded his perceptions as to the true nature of the game of war. Now his eyes beheld the contorted form of one with whose manly aspect he had been familiar in the settlement, scarcely recognisable in its ghastliness, with blue lips, protruding eyeballs, and a horrid mass of coagulated blood where the once curling hair had been. Victor's ears were still ringing with the deadly shriek that had burst from Vallé's wife when she heard the dreadful news—just as he and his party galloped out of the camp. He knew also that the dead hunter left several young children to be pinched by dire poverty in future years for want of their natural bread-winner. These and many similar thoughts crowded on his throbbing brain as he gazed at the new and terrible sight, and his eyes began for the first time to open to truths which ever after influenced his opinions while reading of the so-called triumphs of war.

"Vengeance!" was now the cry, as the hunters left the place in hot pursuit.

They knew that the savages could not be far off, and that they were unmounted, but they also knew that if they succeeded in gaining the larger portions of thick bush with which some parts of that region were covered it would be impossible to follow them up. Moreover, it was growing dark, and there was no time to lose.

In a few minutes Ian and Victor were left alone with

two men who had agreed to look after the body of the murdered man.

Sadly and silently they assisted in laying the corpse in a cavity of the rocks, and covering it over with large stones to protect it from wolves, and then prepared to leave the spot.

"Will they succeed, think you, in overtaking the murderers?" asked Victor of one of the men.

"Succeed? Ay, no fear of that!" replied the hunter, with a vindictive scowl. "It's not the first time some of them have been out after the Sioux."

"We will ride back to camp, Vic," said Ian, rousing himself from a reverie; "it is no part of our duty to assist in executing vengeance. If the camp were assailed we should indeed be bound to help defend it, but there are more than enough men out to hunt down these murderers. If a cart is not already on its way for the corpse we will send one. Come."

That night the avengers returned; they had overtaken and shot down eight of the Sioux,—the remaining four gained the bushes and escaped. None of themselves were hurt, but one had a narrow escape, an arrow having passed between his shirt and skin.

Next day Victor and his friends prepared to leave the hunters and resume the chase of Petawanaquat, but they were arrested by one of those terrific thunderstorms which occasionally visit the prairies. They were already mounted and on the point of taking leave, when the air darkened suddenly, the sky became overcast, lightning began to flash in vivid gleams, and a crash of thunder seemed to rend the earth and heavens.

Presently Herr Winklemann, who meant to ride with the parting guests a short way, and was also mounted, uttered a shout, and immediately horse and man rolled

upon the plain. The man rose slowly, but the horse lay still—killed by lightning! By the same flash, apparently, another horse was struck dead.

"Vell, you has tomble very often vid me," said the German, contemplating the fallen steed, "bot you vill tomble again no mor."

"Oui, he is mort," sighed Rollin, looking down.

After this first burst there was a considerable lull, but appearances were so gloomy that departure was delayed.

Soon after, the storm burst with a degree of violence that the oldest hunter said he had never before witnessed. Lightning, wind, rain, thunder, seemed to have selected the spot for a battle-ground. Although the camp was pitched on comparatively high and rocky ground, the deluge was so great that in the course of ten minutes nearly everything was afloat. The camp was literally swimming, and some of the smaller children were with difficulty saved from drowning. So furious was the wind that the tents were either thrown down or blown to ribbons.* During the storm three of the Indian tents, or lodges, were struck by lightning. In one of these a Canadian was killed; in another all the inmates—an Indian, his wife, two children, and two dogs—were killed, and a gun beside them was melted in several parts as though it had been lead.

Then there fell a shower of hail, the stones of which were solid angular pieces of ice larger than a hen's egg, by which some of the people were severely wounded before they found shelter under the carts and overturned tents.

It was a terrible display of the power of God, and yet, strange to say, so far is such a scene incapable of influencing man's fallen nature for good, that occasions such

* This is no picture of the fancy, but true in all its details.

as these, when the camp is in disorder, are often taken advantage of by Indians to approach and steal the horses.

Being well aware of this propensity of the red man, Baptiste Warder and his captains kept a sharp look-out. It was well they did so, for, after the storm, a formidable band of Sioux was discovered within a short distance of the camp.

Their wily chief was, however, equal to the occasion. He assumed the rôle of an injured man. He had come to remonstrate with the half-breeds, and charge them with cruelty.

"My warriors," said he, "killed only one of your people, and for that one you murdered eight of my braves."

The half-breeds spoke the chief fairly, however, and entertained him and his followers hospitably, so that the affair was amicably settled, and they went away in peace. But dark eyes had met in deadly hatred during the conference.

The party of Indians who had joined the hunters with Victor and his comrades were Saulteaux * and the bitter enemies of the Sioux. Some time after the Sioux had taken their departure, a band of about fifty of these Saulteaux left the camp stealthily, and pursued a detached party of their foes for about ten miles. They overtook them at a small stream. The unsuspecting Sioux prepared to swim over to them, mistaking them at first for friends, but a volley which killed three undeceived them. The fire was instantly returned and a smoke raised to alarm the country. The Saulteaux retreated, while the Sioux, gathering force, pursued, and it is probable that the whole of the assailants would have been scalped if night had not favoured them. In this raid seven Sioux

* Pronounced Sotoes.

were killed and three wounded. Of the Saulteaux three were killed and four wounded.

Again the camp was visited by enraged and armed Sioux to the number of 300, who challenged the Saulteaux to come forth man to man, and fight it out. The latter declined, and the half-breeds, many of whom were related by marriage to the Saulteaux, managed to patch up a hollow peace between them.

At last Victor, Ian, and Rollin got away, glad to have done both with buffalo and savages. They now possessed three good horses, a supply of fresh provisions, and plenty of ammunition. Thus provided they galloped off with light hearts over the boundless plains, and soon left the camp of the hunters far behind them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHASE CONTINUED, AND BROUGHT TO A FIERY TERMINATION.

WITH the unerring certainty of bloodhounds, the three friends now settled down to the pursuit of Petawanaquat. From the Saulteaux Indians



THE PRAIRIE ON FIRE.

they had received an exact description of the spot where the fugitive had parted from them; they had, therefore, little difficulty in finding it. Still less difficulty had they in following up the trail, for the grass was by that time very long, and a horse leaves a track in such grass which, if not very obvious to unaccustomed eyes, is as plain as a highway to the vision of a backwoods hunter or a redskin.

Over the prairie waves they sped, with growing excitement as their hopes of success increased; now thundering down into the hollows, anon mounting the gentle slopes at full swing, or rounding the clumps of trees that here and there dotted the prairie like islets in an interminable sea of green; and ever, as they rounded an islet or topped a prairie wave, they strained their eyes in earnest expectation of seeing the objects of their pursuit on the horizon, but for several days they raced, and gazed, and hoped in vain. Still they did not lose confidence, but pressed persistently on.

"Our horses are fresh and good," said Victor as they reined in to a gentle trot on the brow of a knoll to rest for a few minutes, "and Petawanaquat's horse, whether good or bad, is double-weighted—although, to be sure, Tony is not heavy."

"Besides," said Ian, "the redskin does not dream now of pursuit; so that, pressing on as we do, we *must* overtake him ere long."

"Voila, de buffalo!" said Rollin, pointing to a group of these huge creatures, in the midst of which two bulls were waging furious war, while the cows stood by and looked on. "Shall ve go an' chase dem?"

"No, Rollin; we have more important game to chase," said Victor, whose conscience, now that he was free from the exciting influences of the camp, had twinged him

more than once for his delay—even although it was partly justifiable—while the image of poor Tony, with outstretched, appealing hands on a flying horse behind a savage, was ever before him. "Come on! come on!"

He switched his horse, and went skimming down the slope, followed by his comrades.

Soon they came to a place where the ground was more broken and rocky.

"Voila! a bar! a bar!" shouted the excitable half-breed; "com, kill him!"

They looked, and there, sure enough, was an object which Rollin declared was a large grizzly bear. It was a long way off, however, and the ground between them seemed very broken and difficult to traverse on horseback. Ian Macdonald thought of the bear's claws, and a collar, and Elsie, and tightened his reins. Then he thought of the risk of breaking a horse's leg if the bear should lead them a long chase over such ground, and of the certain loss of time, and of Petawanaquat pushing on ahead. It was a tempting opportunity, but his power of self-denial triumphed.

"No, Rollin, we have no time to hunt."

"Behold!" exclaimed Rollin again; "more buffalo!"

They had swept past the stony ground and rounded a clump of trees, behind which a small herd of animals stood for a few seconds, staring at them in mute amazement. These snorted, set up their tails, and tore wildly away to the right. This was too much. With a gleeful yell, Rollin turned to pursue, but Victor called to him angrily to let the buffalo be. The half-breed turned back with a sigh.

"Ah, vell! ve must forbear."

"I say, Vic," remarked Ian, with a significant smile, "why won't you go after the buffalo?"

Victor looked at his friend in surprise.

"Surely," he said, "it is more important as well as more interesting to rescue one's brother than to chase wild animals!"

"True, but how does that sentiment accord with your wish that you might spend eternity in hunting buffalo?"

"Oh, you know," returned Victor, with a laugh, "when I said that I wasn't thinking of—of—"

He switched his horse into a wilder gallop, and said no more. He had said quite enough. He was not the only youth in North America and elsewhere who has uttered a good deal of nonsense without "thinking." But then that was long ago. Youths are wiser now!

On the evening of that day, when the sun went down, and when it became too dark to follow the trail, and, therefore, unsafe to travel for fear of stumbling into badger-holes, the three friends pulled up beside a clump of wood on the margin of a little stream, and prepared their encampment.

Little did they imagine, while busy with the fire and kettle, how nearly they had gained their end, yet how disastrously they had missed it. Well for man, sometimes, that he is ignorant of what takes place around him. Had the three pursuers known who was encamped in a clump of trees not half a mile beyond them, they would not have feasted that night so heartily, nor would they have gone to sleep with such calm placidity.

In the clump of trees referred to, Petawanaquat himself sat smoking over the dying embers of the fire that had cooked his recently devoured supper, and Tony, full to repletion, lay on his back gazing at him in quiet satisfaction, mingled slightly with wonder; for Tony was a philosopher in a small way, and familiarity with his

father's pipe had failed to set at rest a question which perplexed his mind, namely, why men should draw smoke into their mouths merely to puff it out again!

When the pipe and the camp-fire had burnt low, Tony observed, with much interest, that the Indian's eyes became suddenly fixed, that his nostrils dilated, his lips ceased to move, the cloud that had just escaped from them curled round the superincumbent nose and disappeared without being followed by another cloud, and the entire man became rigid like a brown statue. At that point Tony ceased to think, because tired nature asserted her claims, and he fell sound asleep.

The practised ear of the Indian had detected the sound of horses' feet on the prairie. To any ordinary man no sound at all would have been perceptible save the sighing of the night wind. Petawanaquat, however, not only heard the tramp, but could distinguish it from that of buffalo. He rose softly, ascertained that Tony was asleep, turned aside the bushes, and melted into darkness among the trees. Presently he emerged on the plain at the other side of the clump, and there stood still. Patience is one of the red man's characteristics. He did not move hand or foot for half an hour, during which time, despite the distance of the neighbouring clump, he could easily make out the sound of an axe chopping wood, and even heard human voices in conversation. Then a gleam of light flickered among the trees, and the kindling camp-fire of our three friends became visible.

The Indian now felt comparatively safe. He knew that, whoever the new arrivals might be, they were unsuspicious of his presence in the vicinity, and had encamped for the night. He also knew that when men are busy with supper they are not very watchful, especially when danger is not expected. He, therefore, gave them

another quarter of an hour to prepare supper, and then moved stealthily over the plain towards them.

On gaining the shelter of the trees, Petawanaquat advanced with cat-like caution, until he could clearly see the travellers. He recognised them instantly, and a dark frown settled on his features. His first thought was to steal their horses, and thus leave them incapable of pursuing further, but Ian Macdonald was too much of a backwoodsman to give a foe the opportunity to do this. The horses were tethered close beside the fire. Then the Indian thought of shooting them, but his gun being a single-barrel, such as was sold to the Indians by the fur-traders, could only dispose of one horse at a time, thus leaving the other two to his incensed enemies, who would probably capture him before he could reload or regain his own camp. With a feeling of baffled rage he suddenly thought of murder. He could easily kill Ian Macdonald, could probably reload before Rollin should overtake him, and as for Victor, he was nothing! Quick as thought the Indian raised his gun, and took a long steady aim at Ian's forehead.

The contemplative schoolmaster was looking at the fire, thinking of Elsie at the time. He smiled as he thought of her. Perhaps it was the smile that checked the savage; perhaps it was the words, "Thou shalt not kill," which had been sounded in his ears more than once during the past winter by the missionary. At all events, the fatal trigger was not drawn. Ian's contemplations were not disturbed, the gun was lowered, and the savage melted once more into the deep shade of the thicket.

Returning to his own camp in the same cat-like manner as before, Petawanaquat quietly but quickly packed his provisions, etc., on his horse. When all was ready he tried to awaken Tony, but Tony slept the sleep of infancy

and comparative innocence. The Indian pushed him, kicked him, even lifted him up and shook him, before he awoke. Then, expressing astonishment at having to resume the journey at so early an hour, the child submitted silently to orders.

In a few minutes the Indian led his horse down to the rivulet close at hand, crossed it with Tony, half asleep, clinging to his back, ascended the opposite bank, and gained the level plain. Here he mounted, with Tony in front to guard against the risk of his falling off in a state of slumber, and galloped away.

Fortunately for him, the moon had risen, for red men are not a whit better than white at seeing in the dark. Indeed, we question the proverbial capacity of cats in that way. True, the orb of night was clouded, and only in her first quarter, but she gave light enough to enable the horseman to avoid dangers and proceed at full speed. Thus, while the pursuers snored, the pursued went scouring over the prairies, farther and farther towards the far west.

Michel Rollin, being a lively, restless character, used generally to be up before his comrades in the mornings, and gratified an inquisitive propensity by poking about. In his pokings he discovered the trail of the midnight visitor, and thereupon set up a howl of surprise that effectually roused Ian and Victor. These, guns in hand, rushed, as they fancied, to the rescue.

"What a noisy goose you are!" said Victor, on learning the cause of the cry.

"There is reason for haste, however," said Ian, rising from a close inspection of the trail. "Some one has been here in the night watching us. Why he didn't join us if a friend, or kill us if an enemy, puzzles me. If there were horse-tracks about I should say it must have been

Petawanaquat himself. Come, we must mount and away without breakfast."

They went off accordingly, and soon traced the Indian's original track to the place where he had encamped. Petawanaquat had taken the precaution to pour water on his fire, so as to cool the ashes, and thus lead to the supposition that he had been gone a considerable time, but Ian was not to be so easily deceived. The moment he had examined the extinct fire, and made up his mind, he leaped up and followed the trail to the spot where the Indian had mounted.

"Now then, mount, boys!" he cried, vaulting into the saddle, "no time to lose. The redskin seems to have a good horse, and knows we are at his heels. It will be a straight end-on race now. Hup! get along!"

Their course at first lay over a level part of the plain, which rendered full speed possible; then they came to a part where the thick grass grew rank and high, rendering the work severe. As the sun rose high, they came to a small pond, or pool.

"The rascal has halted here, I see!" cried Ian, pulling up, leaping off, and running to the water, which he lifted to his mouth in both hands, while his panting horse stooped and drank. "It was very likely more for Tony's sake than for his own. But if he could stop, so can we for a few minutes."

"It vill make de horses go more better," said Rollin, unstrapping the pemmican bag.

"That's right," cried Victor, "give us a junk—a big one—so—thanks, we can eat it as we go."

Up and away they went again, urging their horses now to do their utmost, for they began to hope that the day of success had surely arrived.

Still far ahead of his pursuers, the Indian rode along

without check or halt, to the alarm of Tony, who felt that something unusual had occurred to make his self-appointed father look so fierce.

"What de matter?" he ventured to ask. "Nobody chase us."

"Let Tonyquat shut his mouth," was the brief reply. And Tony obeyed. He was learning fast!

Suddenly the air on the horizon ahead became clouded. The eyes of the savage dilated with an expression that almost amounted to alarm. Could it be fire? It was—the prairie on fire! As the wind blew towards him, the consuming flames and smoke approached him at greater speed than he approached them. They must soon meet. Behind were the pursuers; in front the flames.

There was but one course open. As the fire drew near the Indian stopped, dismounted, and tore up and beat down a portion of the grass around him. Then he struck a light with flint and steel and set fire to the grass to leeward of the cleared space. It burned slowly at first, and he looked anxiously back as the roar of the fiery storm swelled upon his ear. Tony looked on in mute alarm and surprise. The horse raised its head wildly and became restive, but the Indian, having now lighted the long grass thoroughly, restrained it. Presently he sprang on its back and drew Tony up beside him. Flames and smoke were now on both sides of him. When the grass was consumed to leeward he rode on to the blackened space—not a moment too soon, however. It was barely large enough to serve as a spot of refuge when the storm rolled down and almost suffocated horse and riders with smoke. Then the fire at that spot went out for want of fuel, and thus the way was opened to the coal-black plain over which it had swept. Away flew the Indian then, diverging sharply to the right, so as to skirt the fire (now on its

windward side), and riding frequently into the very fringe of flame, so that his footprints might be burnt up.

When, some hours later, the pursuers met the fire, they went through the same performance in exactly the same manner, excepting that Victor and Rollin acted with much greater excitement than the savage. But when they had escaped the flames, and rode out upon the burnt prairie to continue the chase, every trace of those of whom they were in pursuit had completely vanished away.

CHAPTER IX.

METEOROLOGICAL CHANGES AND CONSEQUENCES, AND A GRAND OPPORTUNITY MISIMPROVED.

IT must not be supposed that the life of a backwoodsman is all pleasure and excitement. Not wishing to disappoint our readers with it, we have hitherto presented chiefly its bright phases, but truth requires that we should now portray some of the darker aspects of that life. For instance, it was a very sombre aspect indeed of prairie-life when Victor Ravenshaw and his party crossed a stony place where Victor's horse tripped and rolled over, causing the rider to execute a somersault which laid him flat upon the plain, compelling the party to encamp there for three days until he was sufficiently recovered to resume the journey. Perhaps we should say the chase, for, although the trail had been lost, hope was strong, and the pursuers continued to advance steadily in what they believed to be the right direction.

The aspect of things became still more dreary when the fine weather, which was almost uninterrupted as summer advanced, gave way to a period of wind and rain. Still, they pushed on hopefully. Michel Rollin alone was despondent.

"It is a vild goose chase now," he remarked sulkily one day, while the wet fuel refused to kindle.

That same night Victor half awoke and growled. He

seldom awoke of his own accord. Nature had so arranged it that parents, or comrades, usually found it necessary to arouse him with much shouting and shaking—not unfrequently with kicks. But there was a more powerful influence than parents, comrades, or kicks at work that night. Being tired and sleepy, the party had carelessly made their beds in a hollow. It was fair when they lay down. Soon afterwards, a small but exceedingly heavy rain descended like dew upon their unprotected heads. It soaked their blankets and passed through. It soaked their garments and passed through. It reached their skins, which it could not so easily pass through, but was stopped and warmed before being absorbed. A few uneasy turns and movements, with an occasional growl, was the result—nothing more. But when the density of the rain increased, and the crevices in the soil turned into active water-courses, and their hollow became a pool, Victor became, as we have said, half-awake. Presently he awoke completely, sat up, and scratched his head. It was the power of a soft and gentle but persistent influence triumphantly asserted.

"W'ass-'e-marrer?" asked Ian, without moving.

"Why (yawning), Lake Winnipeg is a trifle to this," said Victor.

"O-gor-o-sleep," returned Ian.

"Niagara have com to de plains!" exclaimed Rollin, rising to a sitting posture in desperation. "It have been rush 'longside of me spine for two hours by de cloke. Oui."

This aroused Ian, who also sat up disconsolate and yawned.

"It 's uncomfortable," he remarked.

No one replied to so ridiculously obvious a truth, but each man slowly rose and stumbled towards higher ground. To add to their discomfort the night was intensely dark;

even if wide awake they could not have seen a yard in front of them.

"Have you found a tree?" asked Victor.

"Oui—yes—to be sure," said Rollin angrily. "Anyhow von branch of a tree have found *me*, an' a'most split my head."

"Where is it?—speak, man; I can see nothing. Is it —ah! I've found it too."

"Vid yoos head?" inquired Rollin, chuckling.

Victor condescended not to reply, but lay down under the partial shelter of the tree, rolled himself up in his wet blanket, and went to sleep. His companions followed suit. Yes, reader, we can vouch for the truth of this, having more than once slept damp and soundly in a wet blanket. But they did not like it, and their spirits were down about zero when they mounted at grey dawn and resumed the chase in a dull, dreadful drizzle.

After a time the aspect of the scenery changed. The rolling plain became more irregular and broken than heretofore, and was more studded with patches of woodland, which here and there almost assumed the dignity of forests.

One evening the clouds broke; glimpses of the heavenly blue appeared to gladden our travellers, and ere long the sun beamed forth in all its wonted splendour. Riding out into a wide stretch of open country, they bounded away with that exuberance of feeling which is frequently the result of sunshine after rain.

"It is like heaven upon earth," cried Victor, pulling up after a long run.

"I wonder what heaven is like," returned Ian musingly. "It sometimes occurs to me that we think and speak far too little of heaven, which is a strange thing, considering that we all hope to go there in the long-run, and expect to live there for ever."

"Oh! come now, Mr. Wiseman," said Victor, "I didn't mean to call forth a sermon."

"Your remark, Vic, only brings out one of the curious features of the case. If I had spoken of buffalo-hunting, or riding, or boating, or even of the redskin's happy hunting-grounds—anything under the sun or above it—all would have been well and in order, but directly I refer to *our own* heaven I am sermonising!"

"Well, because it's so like the parsons," pleaded Victor.

"What then? Were not the parsons, as you style them, sent to raise our thoughts to God and heaven by preaching Christ? I admit that *some* of them don't raise our thoughts high, and a few of them help rather to drag our thoughts downward. Still, as a class, they are God's servants; and for myself I feel that I don't consider sufficiently what they have to tell us. I don't wish to sermonise; I merely wish to ventilate my own thoughts and get light if I can. You are willing to chat with me, Vic, on all other subjects; why not on this?"

"Oh! I've no objection, Ian; none whatever, only it's—it's—I say, there seems to me to be some sort of brute moving down in the woods there. Hist! let's keep round by that rocky knoll, and I'll run up to see what it is."

Victor did not mean this as a violent change of subject, although he was not sorry to make the change. His attention had really been attracted by some animal which he said and hoped was a bear. They soon galloped to the foot of the knoll, which was very rugged—covered with rocks and bushes. Victor ascended on foot, while his comrades remained at the bottom holding his horse.

The sight that met his eyes thrilled him. In the distance, on a wooded eminence, sat a huge grizzly bear. The size of Victor's eyes when he looked back at his comrades was eloquently suggestive, even if he had not



"A MONSTROUS GRIZZLY!" HE EXCLAIMED IN A HOARSE WHISPER.—Page 89.

drawn back and descended the slope toward them on tip-toe and with preternatural caution.

"A monstrous grizzly!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper—though the bear was at least half a mile off on the other side of the knoll.

The eyes of Ian surpassed those of Victor in the matter of dilation.

"Did he see you?"

"No; he was nibbling his paws when I gave him my last look."

"Now, comrades," said Ian, whose usually calm demeanour had given place to intense, yet suppressed excitement, "it may seem selfish—though I hope it is not—when I ask you to leave that bear entirely to me. You know, Vic, that your sister Elsie once expressed a wish for a grizzly-bear collar, and at the time I inwardly resolved to get her one, of my own procuring, if I could. It is a whim, you know, but, in the circumstances, I do hope that—that—".

"Ah! it is for une dame—une affair of de heart. Bon! You shall go in an' vin," said the gallant Rollin.

"I don't know," said Victor dubiously; "it seems to me rather hard to give up my chance of the first grizzly I 've ever seen. However, I 'm willing to do so on one condition—that Rollin and I go as near you as may be without interfering. You know—excuse me, Ian—what an awful bad shot you are. If you were to miss, you know—which you 're sure to do—and we were not there—eh?"

"All right, you shall go with me; but have a care, no helping of me except in case of dire necessity."

This being agreed to, they made a wide circuit to reach a hollow. In its shelter they galloped swiftly towards the woodland, near the margin of which the bear had been seen. Arrived at a point which they judged to be

near the animal, they dismounted, fastened up their horses, and prepared for war.

There were no encumbrances to lay aside, for they travelled in the simplest possible costume, but Ian drew the charge of his gun, wiped the piece carefully out with a bit of rag, made sure that the touch-hole was clear fixed in a new flint, and loaded carefully with ball. The others acted similarly.

"Empty de pan an' prime again ven you gits near," said Rollin.

Ian made some uncalled-for reference to eggs and the education of Rollin's grandmother, tightened his belt, felt that the hatchet and scalping-knife were handy behind him, and set off on his adventure, followed by his companions at a considerable distance.

On drawing near to the outer edge of the woods he stooped slightly, and trod with the extreme caution of an Indian. Indeed, no red man could have beaten Ian at wood-craft—except, of course, in the matter of shooting. He felt this defect keenly as he glided along, but never faltered for an instant. Elsie smiled at him as visibly as if she had been there. His mind was made up.

At the edge of the wood he saw the rough spot where the bear had been seen, but no bear was visible. He felt a sinking of the heart. "It must have heard me and run away," he thought, and hurried forward. The actual spot where it had been seen was reached, but Bruin was not there. Disappointment rendered Ian somewhat impatient. He entered the bushes beyond the knoll hastily. The bear had only changed its position, and was wagging its head and nibbling its paws on the other side of these bushes. It heard a footstep, ceased to nibble and wag, and looked up inquiringly. Suddenly Macdonald burst through the bushes and stood before him.

It is an open question whether the man or the beast was the more surprised, for the former had given up all hope by that time. But the bear was first to recover self-possession, and advanced to meet the intruder.

It is well known that the king of the western wilds is endowed with more than average ferocity and courage. He may perhaps let you alone if you let him alone, but if you take him by surprise he is not prone to flee. The bear in question was a magnificent specimen, with claws like the fingers of a man. Even in that moment of extreme peril Ian saw these claws strung together and encircling Elsie's neck.

We say that the peril was extreme, for not only was the hunter a bad shot, but the hunted was a creature whose tenacity of life is so great that one shot, even if well placed, is not sufficient to kill it outright.

No one knew all this better than Ian Macdonald, but Elsie smiled approval, and Ian, being a matter-of-fact, unromantic fellow, clenched his teeth with a snap and went down on one knee. The bear quickened his pace and came straight at him. Ian raised his gun. Then there came a gush of feeling of some sort at his heart. What if he should miss? What if the gun should miss fire? Certain death! he well knew that. He took deadly aim when the monster was within a few yards of him and fired at the centre of its chest. The ball took effect on the extreme point of its nose, coursed under the skin over its forehead, and went out at the back of its head.

Never before was a shot taken with a more demonstrative expression of rage. To say that the bear roared would be feeble. A compounded steam-whistle and bassoon might give a suggestive illustration. The pain must have been acute, for the creature fell on its knees, drove its nose into the ground, and produced a miniature

earthquake with a snort. Then it sprang up and rushed at its foe. Ian was reloading swiftly for his life. Vain hope. Men used to breech-loaders can scarce understand the slow operations of muzzle-loaders. He had only got the powder in, and was plucking a bullet from his pouch. Another moment and he would have been down, when crack! crack! went shots on either side of him, and the bear fell with a ball from Victor in its heart and another from Rollin in its spine.

Even thus fatally wounded it strove to reach its conquerors, and continued to show signs of ungovernable fury until its huge life went out.

Poor Ian stood resting on his gun, and looking at it, the picture of despair.

"You hit him after all," said Victor, with a look of admiration at his friend, not on account of the shooting, but of his dauntless courage. "And of course," he continued, "the grizzly is yours, because you drew first blood."

Ian did not reply at once, but shook his head gravely.

"If you and Rollin had not been here," he said, "I should have been dead by this time. No, Vic, no. Do you think I would present Elsie with a collar thus procured? The bear belongs to you and Rollin, for it seems to me that both shots have been equally fatal. You shall divide the claws between you, I will have none of them."

There was bitterness in poor Ian's spirit, for grizzly bears were not to be fallen in with every day, and it might be that he would never have another opportunity. Even if he had, what could he do?

"I don't believe I could hit a house if it were running," he remarked that night at supper. "My only chance will be to wait till the bear is upon me, shove my gun into

his mouth, and pull the trigger when the muzzle is well down his throat."

"That would be throttling a bear indeed," said Victor, with a laugh, as he threw a fresh log on the fire. "What say you, Rollin?"

"It vould bu'st de gun," replied the half-breed, whose mind, just then, was steeped in tobacco smoke. "Bot," he continued, "it vould be vorth vile to try. Possiblement de bu'stin' of de gun in his troat might do ver vell. It vould give him con—con—vat you call him? De ting vat leetil chile have?"

"Contrariness," said Victor.

"Contradictiousness," suggested Ian; "they're both good long words, after your own heart."

"Non, non! Con—convulsions, dat is it. Anyhow it vould injure his digestiveness."

"Ha! ha! yes, so it would," cried Victor, tossing off a can of cold water like a very toper. "Well, boys, I'm off to sleep, my digestiveness being uninjured as yet. Good-night."

"What! without a pipe, Vic?"

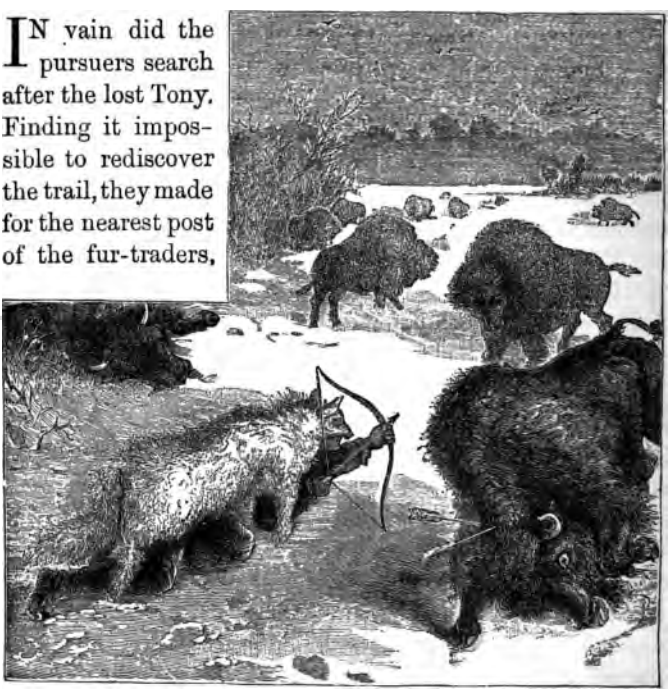
"Come, now, don't chaff. To tell you the truth, Ian, I've been acting *your* part lately. I've been preaching a sermon to myself, the text of which was given to me by Herr Winklemann the night before we left the buffalo-runners, and I've been considerably impressed by my own preaching. Anyhow, I mean to take my own advice—good-night, again."

Ian returned "good-night" with a smile, and, lying down beside him, gazed long and thoughtfully through the trees overhead at the twinkling, tranquil stars. Michel Rollin continued to smoke and meditate for another hour. Then he shook the ashes out of his pipe, heaped fresh logs on the declining fire, and followed his comrades to the land of Nod.

CHAPTER X.

FATE OF THE BUFFALO-HUNTERS.

IN vain did the pursuers search after the lost Tony. Finding it impossible to rediscover the trail, they made for the nearest post of the fur-traders,



"He crept into the midst of the unsuspicious band."—Page 97.

from whom they heard of an Indian who had passed that way in the direction of the Rocky Mountains, but the traders had taken no special notice of the boy, and could tell nothing about him. They willingly, however, supplied the pursuers with provisions on credit, for they knew Victor's father well by repute, and allowed them to join a party who were about to ascend the Saskatchewan river.

On being further questioned, one of the traders did remember that the hair of the boy seemed to him unusually brown and curly for that of a redskin, but his reminiscences were somewhat vague. Still, on the strength of them, Victor and Ian resolved to continue the chase, and Rollin agreed to follow. Thus the summer and autumn passed away.

Meanwhile a terrible disaster had befallen the buffalo-hunters of the Red River.

We have said that after disposing of the proceeds of the spring hunt in the settlement, and thus securing additional supplies, it is the custom of the hunters to return to the plains for the fall or autumn hunt, which is usually expected to furnish the means of subsistence during the long and severe winter. But this hunt is not always a success, and when it is a partial failure the gay, improvident, harum-scarum half-breeds have a sad time of it. Occasionally there is a total failure of the hunt, and then starvation stares them in the face. Such was the case at the time of which we write, and the improvident habits of those people in times of superabundance began to tell.

Many a time in spring had the slaughter of animals been so great that thousands of their carcasses were left where they fell, nothing but the tongues having been carried away by the hunters. It was calculated that nearly two-thirds of the entire spring hunt had been thus

left to the wolves. Nevertheless, the result of that hunt was so great that the quantity of fresh provisions—fat, pemmican, and dried meat—brought into Red River amounted to considerably over one million pounds weight, or about two hundred pounds weight for each individual, old and young, in the settlement. A large proportion of this was purchased by the Hudson's Bay Company, at the rate of twopence per pound, for the supply of their numerous outposts, and the half-breed hunters pocketed among them a sum of nearly £1200. This, however, was their only market, the sales to settlers being comparatively insignificant. In the same year the agriculturists did not make nearly so large a sum—but then the agriculturists were steady, and their gains were saved, while the jovial half-breed hunters were volatile, and their gains underwent the process of evaporation. Indeed, it took the most of their gains to pay their debts. Thus, with renewed supplies on credit, they took the field for the fall campaign in little more than a month after their return from the previous hunt.

It is not our purpose to follow the band step by step. It is sufficient to say that the season was a bad one; that the hunters broke up into small bands when winter set in, and some of these followed the fortunes of the Indians, who of course followed the buffalo as their only means of subsistence.

In one of these scattered groups were Herr Winklemann and Baptiste Warder—the latter no longer a captain, his commission having lapsed with the breaking up of the spring hunt. The plains were covered with the first snows. The party were encamped on a small eminence whence a wide range of country could be seen.

"There is a small herd on the horizon," said Baptiste, descending from the highest part of the hillock towards

the fire where the German was seated eating a scrap of dried meat.

"Zat is vell. I vill go after dem."

He raised his bulky frame with a sigh, for he was somewhat weak and dispirited—the band with which he hunted having been at the starving-point for some days. Winklemann clothed himself in a wolf-skin, to which the ears and part of the head adhered. A small sledge, which may be described as a long thin plank with one end curled up, was brought to him by a hungry-looking squaw Four dogs were attached to it with miniature harness made to fit them. When all was ready the hunter flung himself flat on his face at full length on the sledge, cracked his whip, and away went the dogs at full speed. Herr Winklemann was armed only with bow and arrows, such weapons being most suitable for the work in hand.

Directing his course to a small clump of trees near to which the buffalo were scraping away the yet shallow snow to reach their food, he soon gained the shelter of the bushes, fastened up the dogs, and advanced through the clump to the other side.

It was a fine sight to a hungry man. About a dozen animals were browsing there not far out of gunshot. Winklemann at once went down on all-fours, and arranged the large wolf-skin so that the legs hung down over his own legs and arms, while the head was pulled over his eyes like a hood. Thus disguised, he crept into the midst of the unsuspicious band.

The buffalo is not afraid of wolves. He treats them with contempt. It is only when he is wounded, or enfeebled by sickness or old age, that his sneaking enemy comes and sits down before him, licking his chops in the hope of a meal.

A fat young cow cast a questioning glance at Winkle-

mann as he approached her. He stopped. She turned aside and resumed her feeding. Then she leaped suddenly into the air and fell quivering on the snow, with an arrow up to the feathers in her side. The hunter did not rise. The animals near to the cow looked at her a moment, as if in surprise at her eccentric behaviour, and then went on feeding. Again the hunter bent his bow, and another animal lay dying on the plain. The guardian bull observed this, lifted his shaggy head, and moved that subtle index of temper, his tail. An ill-directed arrow immediately quivered in his flank. With a roar of rage he bounded into the air, tossed up his heels, and seeing no enemy on whom to wreak his vengeance—for the wolf was crouching humbly on the snow—he dashed wildly away, followed by the rest of the astonished herd.

The whole camp had turned out by that time to resume their journey, and advanced joyfully to meet the returning hunter. As they passed one of the numerous clumps of wood with which the plains were studded, another herd of buffalo started suddenly into view. Among other objects of interest in the band of hunters, there happened to be a small child, which was strapped with some luggage on a little sled and drawn by two dogs. These dogs were lively. They went after the buffalo full swing, to the consternation of the parents of the child. It was their only child. If it had only been a fragment of their only child, the two dogs could not have whisked it off more swiftly. Pursuit was useless, yet the whole band ran yelling after it. Soon the dogs reached the heels of the herd, and all were mixed pell-mell together,—the dogs barking, the sled swinging to and fro, and the buffalo kicking. At length a bull gored one of the dogs; his head got entangled in the harness, and he went off at

a gallop, carrying the dog on his horns, the other suspended by the traces, and the sled and child whirling behind him. The enraged creature ran thus for full half a mile before ridding himself of the encumbrance, and many shots were fired at him without effect. Both dogs were killed, but, strange to say, the child was unhurt.

The supply of meat procured at this time, although very acceptable, did not last long, and the group with which Winklemann was connected was soon again reduced to sore straits. It was much the same with the scattered parties elsewhere, though they succeeded by hard work in securing enough of meat to keep themselves alive.

In these winter wanderings after the buffalo, the half-breeds and their families had travelled from 150 to 200 miles from the colony, but in the midst of their privations they kept up heart, always hoping that the sudden discovery of larger herds would ere long convert the present scarcity into the more usual superabundance. But it was otherwise ordained. On the 20th of December there was a fearful snowstorm, such as had not been witnessed for years. It lasted several days, drove the buffalo hopelessly beyond the reach of the hunters, and killed most of their horses. What greatly aggravated the evil was the suddenness of the disaster. According to the account of one who was in Red River at the time, and an eye-witness, the animals disappeared almost instantaneously, and no one was prepared for the inevitable famine that followed. The hunters were at the same time so scattered that they could render each other no assistance. Indeed, the various groups did not know whereabouts the others were. Some were never found. Here and there whole families, despairing of life, weakened by want, and perishing with cold, huddled themselves together for warmth. At first the heat of their bodies melted the snow and

soaked their garments. These soon froze and completed the work of destruction. They died where they lay. Some groups were afterwards discovered thus frozen together in a mass of solid ice.

While the very young and the feeble succumbed at once, the more robust made a brave struggle for life, and, as always happens in cases of extreme suffering, the good or evil qualities of men and women came out prominently to view. The selfish, caring only for themselves, forsook their suffering comrades, seized what they could or dared, and thus prolonged awhile their wretched lives. The unselfish and noble-hearted cared for others, sacrificed themselves, and in many cases were the means of saving life.

Among these last were Baptiste Warder and Winklemann.

"I vill valk to de settlement," said the latter, one morning towards the middle of January, as he rose from his lair and began to prepare breakfast.

"I'll go with you," said Warder. "It's madness to stop here. Death will be at our elbow anyhow, but he'll be sure to strike us all if we remain where we are. The meat we were lucky enough to get yesterday will keep our party on short allowance for some time, and the men will surely find something or other to eke it out while we push on and bring relief."

"Goot," returned the German; "ve vill start after breakfast. My lecks are yet pretty strong."

Accordingly, putting on their snow-shoes, the two friends set out on a journey such as few men would venture to undertake, and fewer could accomplish, in the circumstances.

On the way they had terrible demonstration of the extent of suffering that prevailed among their friends.

They had not walked twenty miles when they came on tracks which led them to a group—a father, mother, and two sons—who were sitting on the snow frozen to death. In solemn silence the hunters stood for a few minutes and looked at the sad sight, then turned and passed on. The case was too urgent to permit of delay. Many lives hung on their speedy conveyance of news to the settlement. They bent forward, and with long swinging strides sped over the dreary plains until darkness—not exhaustion—compelled them to halt. They carried with them a small amount of pemmican, about half rations, trusting to meet with something to shoot on the way. Before daylight the moon rose. They rose with it and pushed on. Suddenly they were arrested by an appalling yell. Next moment a man rushed from a clump of trees brandishing a gun. He stopped when within fifty yards, uttered another demoniacal yell, and took aim at Warder.

Quick as thought the ex-captain brought his own piece to his shoulder. He would have been too late if the gun of his opponent had not missed fire.

"Stop! 'tis Pierre Vincent!" cried Winklemann, just in time to arrest Warder's hand.

Vincent was a well-known comrade, but his face was so disfigured by dirt and blood that they barely recognised him. He flung away his gun when it snapped, and ran wildly towards them.

"Come! come! I have food, food! ha! ha! much food yonder in the bush! My wife and child eat it! they are eating—eating now! ha! ha!"

With another fierce yell the poor maniac—for such he had become—turned off at a tangent, and ran far away over the plains.

They made no attempt to follow him; it would have been useless. In the bush they found his wife and child

stone-dead. Frequently during that terrible walk they came on single tracks, which invariably showed that the traveller had fallen several times, and at length taken to creeping. Then they looked ahead, for they knew that the corpse of a man or woman was not far in advance of them.

One such track led them to a woman with an infant on her back. She was still pretty strong, and trudged bravely over the snow on her snow-shoes, while the little one on her back appeared to be quite content with its lot, although pinched-looking in the face.

The men could not afford to help her on. It would have delayed themselves. The words "life and death" seemed to be ringing constantly in their ears. But they spoke kindly to the poor woman, and gave her nearly all their remaining stock of provisions, reserving just enough for two days.

"I've travelled before now on short allowance," said Warder, with a pitiful smile. "We're sure to come across something before long. If not, we can travel empty for a bit."

"Goot; it vill make us lighter," said Winklemann, with a grave nod.

They parted from the woman, and soon left her out of sight behind. She never reached the settlement. She and the child were afterwards found dead within a quarter of a mile of Pembina. From the report of the party she had left, this poor creature must have travelled upwards of a hundred miles in three days and nights before sinking in that terrible struggle for life.

Warder and his companion did not require to diverge in order to follow these tracks. They all ran one way, straight for Red River—for home! But there were many, very many, who never saw that home again.

One exception they overtook on their fourth day. She was a middle-aged woman, but her visage was so wrinkled by wigwam smoke, and she had such a stoop, that she seemed very old indeed.

"Why, I know that figure," exclaimed Warder, on sighting her; "it's old Liz, Michel Rollin's Scotch mother!"

So it turned out. She was an eccentric creature, full of life, fire, and fun, excessively short and plain, but remarkably strong. She had been forsaken by her nephew, she said. Michel, dear Michel, would not have left her in the lurch if he had been there. But she would be at home to receive Michel on his return. That she would! And she was right. She reached the settlement alive, though terribly exhausted.

Warder and Winklemann did not "come across" anything except one raven, but they shot that and devoured it, bones and all. Then they travelled a day without food and without halt. Next day they might reach the settlement if strength did not fail, but when they lay down that night Warder said he felt like going to die, and Winklemann said that his "lecks" were now useless, and his "lunks" were entirely gone!

CHAPTER XI.

TO THE RESCUE.

ELSIE and Cora Ravenshaw were seated at a table in Willow Creek, with their mother and Miss Trim, repairing garments one night in that same inclement January of which we have been writing.

Mr. Ravenshaw was enjoying his pipe by the stove, and Louis Lambert was making himself agreeable. The old man was a little careworn. No news had yet been received of Tony or of Victor. In regard to the latter he felt easy; Victor could take care of himself, and was in good company, but his heart sank when he thought of his beloved Tony. What would he not have given to have had him smashing his pipe or operating on his scalp at that moment!

"It is an awful winter," observed Elsie, as a gust of wind seemed to nearly blow in the windows.

"I pity the hunters in the plains," said Cora. "They say a rumour has come that they are starving."

"I heard of that, but hope it is not true," observed Lambert.

"Oh! they always talk of starving," said old Ravenshaw. "No fear of 'em."

At that moment there was a sound of shuffling in the porch, the door was thrown open, and a gaunt, haggard man, with torn, snow-sprinkled garments, pale face, and

bloodshot eyes, stood pictured on the background of the dark porch.

"Baptiste Warder!" exclaimed Lambert, starting up.

"Ay, what's left o' me; and here's the remains o' Winklemann," said Warder, pointing to the cadaverous face of the starving German, who followed him.

Need we say that the hunters received a kindly welcome by the Ravenshaw family, as they sank exhausted into chairs? The story of starvation, suffering, and death was soon told—at least in outline.

"You are hungry. When did you eat last?" asked Mr. Ravenshaw, interrupting them.

"Two days ago," replied Warder, with a weary smile.

"It seems like two veeks," observed the German, with a sigh.

"Hallo! Elsie, Cora, victuals!" cried the sympathetic old man, turning quickly round.

But Elsie, whose perceptions were quick, had already placed bread and beer on the table.

"Here, have a drink of beer first," said the host, pouring out a foaming glass.

Warder shook his head. Winklemann remarked that "beer vas goot, ver goot, but they had been used to vatter of late."

"Ah!" he added, after devouring half a slice of bread while waiting for Cora to prepare another; "blessed brod an' booter! Nobody can know vat it is till he have starve for two veek—a—I mean two days; all de same ting in my feel—"

The entrance of a huge bite put a sudden and full stop to the sentence.

"Why did you not stop at some of the houses higher up the river to feed?" asked Lambert.

Warder explained that they meant to have done so,

but they had missed their way. They had grown stupid, he thought, from weakness. When they lost the way they made straight for the river, guided by the pole-star, and the first house they came in sight of was that of Willow Creek.

"How can the pole-star guide one?" asked Cora, in some surprise.

"Don't you know?" said Lambert, going round to where Cora sat, and sitting down beside her. "I will explain."

"If I did know I wouldn't ask," replied Cora coquettishly; "besides, I did not put the question to *you*."

"Nay, but you don't object to my answering it, do you?"

"Not if you are quite sure you can do so correctly."

"I think I can, but the doubts which you and your sister so often throw on my understanding make me almost doubt myself," retorted Lambert, with a laughing glance at Elsie. "You must know, then, that there is a constellation named the Great Bear. It bears about as much resemblance to a bear as it does to a rattlesnake, but that's what astronomers have called it. Part of it is much more in the shape of a plough, and one of the stars in that plough is the pole-star. You can easily distinguish it when once you know how, because two of the other stars are nearly in line with it, and so are called 'pointers.' When you stand looking at the pole-star you are facing the north, and of course, when you know where the north is, you can tell all the other points of the compass."

It must not be supposed that the rest of the party listened to this astronomical lecture. The gallant Louis had sought to interest Elsie as well as Cora, but Elsie was too much engrossed with the way-worn hunters and their

sad tale to think of anything else. When they had eaten enough to check the fierce cravings of hunger they related more particulars.

"And now," said Warder, sitting erect and stretching his long arms in the air as if the more to enjoy the delightful sensation of returning strength, "we have pushed on at the risk of our lives to save time. This news must be carried at once to the Governor. The Company can help us best in a fix like this."

"Of course, of course; I shall send word to him at once," said his host.

"All right, Baptiste," said Lambert, coming forward, "I expected you'd want a messenger. Here I am. Black Dick's in the stable. He'll be in the cariole in ten minutes. What shall I say to the Governor?"

"I'll go with you," answered Warder.

"So vill I," said Winklemann.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," retorted Ravenshaw. "You both need rest. A sound sleep will fit you to do your work more actively in the morning. I myself will go to the fort."

"Only *one* can go, at least in my cariole," remarked Lambert, "for it only holds two, and no one can drive Black Dick but myself."

Baptiste Warder was immoveable; it ended in his going off in the cariole with Lambert to inform the governor of the colony, who was also chief of the Hudson's Bay Company in Red River, and to rouse the settlement. They had to pass the cottage of Angus Macdonald on the way.

"Oh! wow!" cried that excitable old settler when he heard the news. "Can it pe possible? So many tead an' tying. Oh! wow!—Here, Martha! Martha! where iss that wuman? It iss always out of the way she iss

when she 's wantit. Ay, Peegwish, you will do equally well. Go to the staple, man, an' tell the poy to put the mare in the cariole. Make him pe quick; it 's slow he iss at the best, whatever."

Lambert did not wait to hear the remarks of Angus, but drove off at once. Angus put on his leather coat, fur cap, and mittens, and otherwise prepared himself for a drive over the snow-clad plains to Fort Garry, where the Governor dwelt, intending to hear what was going to be done, and offer his services.

With similarly benevolent end in view, old Ravenshaw harnessed his horse and made for the same goal, regardless alike of rheumatism, age, and inclement weather. At a certain point, not far from the creek, the old trader's private track and that which led to the house of Angus Macdonald united, and thereafter joined the main road, which road, by the way, was itself a mere track beaten in the snow, with barely room for two carioles to pass. Now, it so happened that the neighbours came up to the point of junction at the same moment. Both were driving hard, being eager and sympathetic about the sufferings of the plain-hunters. To have continued at the same pace would have been to insure a meeting and a crash. One *must* give way to the other! Since the affair of the knoll these two men had studiously cut each other. They met every Sabbath-day in the same church, and felt this to be incongruous as well as wrong. The son of the one was stolen by savages. The son of the other was doing his utmost to rescue the child. Each regretted having quarrelled with the other, but pride was a powerful influence in both. What was to be done? Time for thought was short, for two fiery steeds were approaching each other at the rate of ten miles an hour. Who was to give in?

"I 'll see both carioles smashed to atoms first!" thought Ravenshaw, grinding his teeth.

"She 'll tie first," thought Angus, pursing his lips.

The instinct of self-preservation caused both to come to a dead and violent halt when within six yards of the meeting-point. A happy thought burst upon Angus at that instant.

"Efter you, sir," he said, with a palpable sneer, at the same time backing his horse slightly.

It was an expression of mock humility, and would become an evidence of superior courtesy if Ravenshaw should go insolently on. If, on the other hand, he should take it well, a friendly reference to the roads or the weather would convert the sneer into a mere nasal tone.

"Ah, thanks, thanks," cried Mr. Ravenshaw heartily, as he drove past; "bad news that about the plain-hunters. I suppose you 've heard it."

"Ay, it iss pad news—ferry pad news inteed, Mister Ruvnshaw. It will pe goin' to the fort ye are?"

"Yes; the poor people will need all the help we can give them."

"They wull that; oo ay."

Discourse being difficult in the circumstances, they drove the remainder of the way in silence, but each knew that the breach between them was healed, and felt relieved. Angus did not, however, imagine that he was any nearer to his desires regarding the knoll. Full well did he understand and appreciate the unalterable nature of Sam Ravenshaw's resolutions, but he was pleased again to be at peace, for, to say truth, he was not fond of war, though ready to fight on the smallest provocation.

Baptiste Warder was right in expecting that the Company would lend their powerful aid to the rescue.

The moment the Governor heard of the disaster, he

took immediate and active steps for sending relief to the plains. Clothing and provisions were packed up as fast as possible, and party after party was sent out with these. But in the nature of things the relief was slow. We have said that some of the hunters and their families had followed the Indians and buffalo to a distance of between 150 and 200 miles. The snow was now so deep that the only means of transport was by dog-sledges. Dogs, being light and short-limbed, can travel where horses cannot, but even dogs require a track, and the only way of making one on the trackless prairie, or in the forest, is by means of a man on snow-shoes, who walks ahead of the dogs and thus "beats the track." The men employed, however, were splendid and persevering walkers, and their hearts were in the work.

Both Samuel Ravenshaw and Angus Macdonald gave liberally to the cause; and each obtaining a team of dogs, accompanied one of the relief parties in a dog-cariole. If the reader were to harness four dogs to a slipper-bath, he would have a fair idea of a dog-cariole and team. Louis Lambert beat the track for old Ravenshaw. He was a recognised suitor at Willow Creek by that time. The old gentleman was well accustomed to the dog-cariole, but to Angus it was new—at least in experience.

"It iss like as if she was goin' to pathe," he remarked, with a grim smile, on stepping into the machine and sitting down, or rather reclining luxuriously among the buffalo robes.

The dogs attempted to run away with him, and succeeded for a hundred yards or so. Then they got off the track, and discovered that Angus was heavy. Then they stopped, put out their tongues, and looked humbly back for the driver to beat the track for them.

A stout young half-breed was the driver. He came up

and led the way until they reached the open plains, where a recent gale had swept away the soft snow, and left a long stretch that was hard enough for the dogs to walk on without sinking. The team was fresh and lively.

"She 'd petter hold on to the tail," suggested Angus.

The driver assented. He had already left the front, and allowed the cariole to pass him, in order to lay hold of the tail-line and check the pace, but the dogs were too sharp for him. They bolted again, ran more than a mile, overturned the cariole, and threw its occupant on the snow, after which they were brought up suddenly by a bush.

On the way the travellers passed several others of the wealthy settlers who were going personally to the rescue. Sympathy for the plain-hunters was universal. Every one lent a willing hand. The result was that the lives of hundreds were saved, though many were lost. Their sufferings were so great that some died on their road to the colony, after being relieved at Pembina. Those found alive had devoured their horses, dogs, raw hides, leather, and their very moccasins. Mr. Ravenshaw and his neighbour passed many corpses on the way, two of which were scarcely cold. They also passed at various places above forty sufferers in seven or eight parties, who were crawling along with great difficulty. To these they distributed the provisions they had brought with them. At last the hunters were all rescued and conveyed to the settlement —one man, with his wife and three children, having been dug out of the snow, where they had been buried for five days and nights. The woman and children recovered, but the man died.

Soon after this sad event the winter began to exhibit unwonted signs of severity. It had begun earlier, and continued later than usual. The snow averaged three feet

deep in the plains and four feet in the woods, and the cold was intense, being frequently down to forty-five degrees below zero of Fahrenheit's scale, while the ice measured between five and six feet in thickness on the rivers.

But the great, significant, and prevailing feature of that winter was snow. Never within the memory of man had there been such heavy, continuous, persistent snow. It blocked up the windows so that men had constantly to clear a passage for daylight. It drifted up the doors so that they were continually cutting passages for themselves to the world outside. It covered the ground to such an extent that fences began to be obliterated, and landmarks to disappear, and it weighted the roofs down until some of the weaker among them bid fair to sink under the load.

"A severe winter" was old Mr. Ravenshaw's usual morning remark as he went to the windows, pipe in hand, before breakfast. To which his better half invariably replied, "Never saw anything like it before;" and Miss Trim remarked, "It is awful."

"It snows hard—what*ever*," was Angus Macdonald's usual observation about the same hour. To which his humble and fast friend Peegwish—who assisted in his kitchen—was wont to answer, "Ho!" and glare solemnly, as though to intimate that his thoughts were too deep for utterance.

Thus the winter passed away, and when spring arrived it had to wage an unusually fierce conflict before it gained the final victory over ice and snow.

CHAPTER XII.

VICTORY!

BUT before that winter closed, ay, before it began, a great victory was gained, which merits special mention here. Let us retrace our steps a little.



IAN HAS HIS WISH—AND MORE!

One morning, while Ian Macdonald was superintending the preparation of breakfast in some far-away part of the western wilderness, and Michel Rollin was cutting firewood, Victor Ravenshaw came rushing into camp with the eager announcement that he had seen the footprints of an *enormous* grizzly bear!

At any time such news would have stirred the blood of Ian, but at that time, when the autumn was nearly over, and hope had almost died in the breast of our scholastic backwoodsman, the news burst upon him with the thrilling force of an electric shock.

"Now, Ian, take your gun and go in and win," said Victor with enthusiasm, for the youth had been infected with Rollin's spirit of gallantry.

"You see," Rollin had said to Victor during a confidential *tête-à-tête*, "ven a lady is in de case ve must bow de head. Ian do lov your sister. Ver goot. Your sister do vish for a bar-claw collar. Ver goot. Vell, de chance turn up at last—von grizzly bar do appear. Who go shot 'im? Vy, Ian, certaintly. Mais, it is pity he am so 'bominibly bad shot!"

Victor, being an unselfish fellow, at once agreed to this; hence his earnest advice that Ian should take his gun and go in and win. But Ian shook his head.

"My dear boy," he said, with a sigh, "it's of no use my attempting to shoot a bear, or anything else. I don't know what can be wrong with my vision, I can see as clear and as far as the best of you, and I'm not bad, you'll allow, at following up a trail over hard ground; but when it comes to squinting along the barrel of a gun I'm worse than useless. It's my belief that if I took aim at a haystack at thirty yards I'd miss it. No, Vic, I must give up the idea of shooting altogether."

"What! have you forgotten the saying, 'Faint heart

never won fair lady'?" exclaimed Victor, in surprise.

"Nay, lad, my memory is not so short as that, neither is my heart as faint as you seem to think it. I do intend to go in and win, but I shall do it after a fashion of my own, Vic."

Rollin, who came up at the moment and flung a bundle of sticks on the fire, demanded to know what "vas the vashion" referred to.

"That I won't tell you at present, boys," said Ian; "but, if you have any regard for me, you'll make me a solemn promise not in any way to interfere with me or my plans unless you see me in actual and imminent danger of losing my life."

"Jus' so," said Rollin, with a nod, "ve vill not step in to de reskoo till you is at de very last gasp."

Having obtained the requisite promise, Ian set off with his comrades to examine the bear's track. There could be but one opinion as to the size of the grizzly which had made it. As Victor had said, it was enormous, and showed that the animal had wandered about hither and thither, as if it had been of an undecided temperament. Moreover the track was quite fresh.

Of course there was much eager conversation about it among the friends; carried on in subdued tones and whispers, as if they feared that the bear might be listening in a neighbouring bush. After discussing the subject in every point of view, and examining the tracks in every light, they returned to the camp, at Victor's suggestion, to talk it over more fully, and make preparations for the hunt. Ian, however, cut short their deliberations by reminding his comrades of their promise, and claiming the strict fulfilment of it.

"If this thing is to be undertaken by me," he said, "I

must have it all my own way and do the thing entirely by myself."

"Nobody objects to your having it all your own way," retorted Victor, somewhat testily, "but why should you be so secret about it? Why not give a fellow some sort of idea what your plan is, so that, if we can't have the pleasure of helping you, we may at least enjoy the comfort of thinking about it?"

"No, Vic, no. I won't give you a hint, because my plan is entirely new, and you would laugh at it; at least it is new to me, for I never heard of its having been attempted with grizzlies before, though I have heard of it in connection with other bears. Besides, I may fail, in which case the less that is known about my failure the better. Only this much will I say, the idea has been suggested to me by the formation of the land hereabouts. You know there is a gap or pass in the rocks just ahead of us, through which the bear seems to have passed more than once in the course of his rambles. Well, that gap is the spot where I will make my attempt. If you follow me to that gap I will at once return to camp and let you manage the matter yourselves."

"Well, well, do as you please," said Victor, with a laugh, "and the sooner you set about it the better. Rollin and I will ride away some miles in the opposite direction and see if we can't get hold of a wild goose for supper."

"Ha! perhaps de grizzly vill get hold of anoder and a vilder goose for supper," said Rollin, with a shake of his head.

When his companions had departed, Ian Macdonald cleaned his gun carefully and loaded with ball; then placing his axe in his belt beside his scalping-knife, he proceeded with long and rapid strides towards the gap or pass above referred to. The bear's track led through this

pass, which was a narrow cut, not more than thirty feet wide, in a steep rocky ridge with which the country at that place was intersected for a considerable distance. The ridge itself, and the pass by which it was divided, were thickly covered with trees and dense undergrowth.

The floor of the pass was level, although rugged, and the rocks on either side rose in a sheer precipice, so that whoever should attempt to penetrate without wings to the region beyond must needs go by that narrow cut.

Arrived at the middle of the pass, where it was narrowest, Ian leant his gun against the precipice on one side, took off his coat, tucked up his sleeves, grasped his axe, and attacked a mighty tree. Like Ulysses of old, he swung the axe with trenchant power and skill. Huge chips flew circling round. Ere long a goodly tree creaked, groaned, and finally fell with a crash upon the ground. It was tough work. Ian heaved a sigh of satisfaction and wiped his streaming brow as he surveyed the fallen monarch. There was another king of the same size near to the opposite precipice, which he felled in the same way. Both monarchs mingled and severely injured their royal heads in the middle of the pass, which thus became entirely blocked up, for our woodsman had so managed that the trees fell right across it.

Next, Ian attacked the united heads, and with great labour hewed a passage through them, near to a spot where a large boulder lay. Selecting another forest king, Ian cut it so that one end of it fell on the boulder. The result of all this hewing and guiding of the falling monarchs was that the only available track through the pass was a hole about four feet in diameter, with a tree of great weight suspended above it by the boulder.

To chop off the branches and convert this latter tree into a log did not take long. Neither did it take much

time or exertion to fashion a sort of support, or trigger, in the shape of a figure 4, immediately under the log, so as to obstruct the hole before mentioned. But to lower the log gently from the boulder on to this trigger without setting it off was a matter of extreme difficulty, requiring great care and much time, for the weight of the log was great, and if it should once slip to the ground, ten Ian Macdonalds could not have raised it up again. It was accomplished at last, however, and several additional heavy logs were leaned upon the main one to increase its weight.

"If he returns this way at all, he will come in the evening," muttered Ian to himself, as he sat down on a stump and surveyed his handiwork with a smile of satisfaction. "But perhaps he may not come back till morning, in which case I shall have to watch here all night, and those impatient geese in the camp will be sure to disturb us on the plea that they feared I had been killed—bah! and perhaps he won't come at all!"

This last idea was not muttered; it was only thought, but the thought banished the smile of satisfaction from Ian's face. In a meditative mood he took up his gun, refreshed the priming and slightly chipped the flint, so as to sharpen its edge and make sure of its striking fire.

By that time it was long past noon, and the hunter was meditating the propriety of going to a neighbouring height to view the surrounding country, when a slight noise attracted his attention. He started, cocked his gun, glared round in all directions, and held his breath.

The noise was not repeated. Gradually the frown of his brows melted, the glare of his eyes abated, the tension of his muscles was relaxed, and his highly-wrought feelings escaped in a long-drawn sigh.

"Pshaw! 'twas nothing. No bear in its senses would

roam about at such an hour, considering the row I have been kicking up with hacking and crashing. Come, I'll go to the top of that crag, and have a look round."

He put on his coat and belt, stuck his axe and knife into the latter, shouldered his gun, and went nimbly up the rocky ascent on his left.

Coming out on a clear spot at the crag which had attracted him, he could see the whole pass beneath him, except the spot where his trap had been laid. That portion was vexatiously hidden by an intervening clump of bushes. Next moment he was petrified, so to speak, by the sight of a grizzly bear sauntering slowly down the pass as if in the enjoyment of an afternoon stroll.

No power on earth—except, perhaps, a glance from Elsie—could have unpetrified Ian Macdonald at that moment. He stood in the half-crouching attitude of one about to spring over the cliff—absolutely motionless—with eyes, mouth, and nostrils wide open, as if to afford free egress to his spirit.

Not until the bear had passed slowly out of sight behind the intervening bushes was he disenchanted. Then, indeed, he leaped up like a startled deer, turned sharp round, and bounded back the way he had come, with as much caution and as little noise as was compatible with such vigorous action.

Before he had retraced his steps ten yards, however, he heard a crash! Well did he know what had caused it. His heart got into his throat somehow. Swallowing it with much difficulty, he ran on, but a roar such as was never uttered by human lungs almost stopped his circulation. A few seconds brought Ian within view of his trap, and what a sight presented itself!

A grizzly bear, which seemed to him the hugest, as it certainly was at that moment the fiercest, that ever roamed

the Rocky Mountains, was struggling furiously under the weight of the ponderous tree, with its superincumbent load of logs. The monster had been caught by the small of the back—if such a back can be said to have possessed a small of any kind—and its rage, mingled as it must have been with surprise, was awful to witness.

The whole framework of the ponderous trap trembled and shook under the influence of the animal's writhings. Heavy though it was, the bear shook it so powerfully at each spasm of rage, that it was plainly too weak to hold him long. In the event of his breaking out, death to the trapper was inevitable.

Ian did not hesitate an instant. His chief fear at the moment was that his comrades at the camp might have heard the roaring—distant though they were from the spot—and might arrive in time to spoil, by sharing, his victory.

Victory? Another struggle such as *that*, and victory would have rested with the bear! Ian resolved to make sure work. He would put missing out of the question. The tremendous claws that had already worked a small pit in the earth reminded him of the collar and of Elsie. Leaping forward, he thrust the point of his gun into the ear of the infuriated animal and pulled the trigger. He was almost stunned by the report and roar, together with an unwonted shock that sent him reeling backward.

We know not how a good twist-barrelled gun would behave if its muzzle were thus stopped, but the common Indian gun used on this occasion was not meant to be thus treated. It was blown to pieces, and Ian stood gazing in speechless surprise at the fragment of wood remaining in his hand. How far it had injured the bear he could not teli, but the shot had not apparently abated its power one jot, for it still heaved upwards in a paroxysm of rage,

and with such force as nearly to overthrow the complex erection that held it down. Evidently there was no time to lose.

Ian drew his axe, grasped it with both hands, raised himself on tiptoe, and brought it down with all his might on the bear's neck.

The grizzly bear is noted for tenacity of life. Ian had not hit the neck-bone. Instead of succumbing to the tremendous blow, it gave the handle of the axe a vicious twist with its paw, which jerked the hunter violently to the ground. Before he could recover himself, the claws which he coveted so much were deep in his right thigh. His presence of mind did not forsake him even then. Drawing his scalping-knife, he wrenched himself round, and twice buried the keen weapon to the haft in the bear's side.

Just then an unwonted swimming sensation came over Ian; his great strength seemed suddenly to dissipate, and the bear, the claw-collar, even Elsie, faded utterly from his mind.

The stars were shining brightly in the calm sky, and twinkling with pleasant tranquillity down upon his upturned countenance when consciousness returned to Ian Macdonald.

"Ah, Vic!" he murmured, with a long sad sigh; "I've had such a splendid dream!"

"Come, that's right, old boy. Here, have another mouthful," said Victor, holding a tin can to his friend's lips. "It's only tea, hot and strong, the best thing in the world to refresh a wounded man; and after such a fight—"

"What!" exclaimed Ian, starting and sitting bolt upright, while he gazed in the faces of his two comrades. "Is it true? *Have* I killed the—the—grizzly?"

"Killed him!" exclaimed Victor, rising; "I should think you have."

"Killed 'im!" echoed Rollin. "You 's killed 'im two or tree time over; vy, you 's axed 'im, stabbed 'im, shotted 'im, busted 'im, squashed 'im—ho!—"

"Am I much damaged?" inquired Ian, interrupting, for he felt weak.

"Oh! no—noting whatsocomever. Only few leetil holes in you 's legs. Be bedder in a veek."

"Look here," said Victor, kneeling beside the wounded man and presenting to him a piece of wood on which were neatly arranged a row of formidable claws. "I knew you would like to see them."

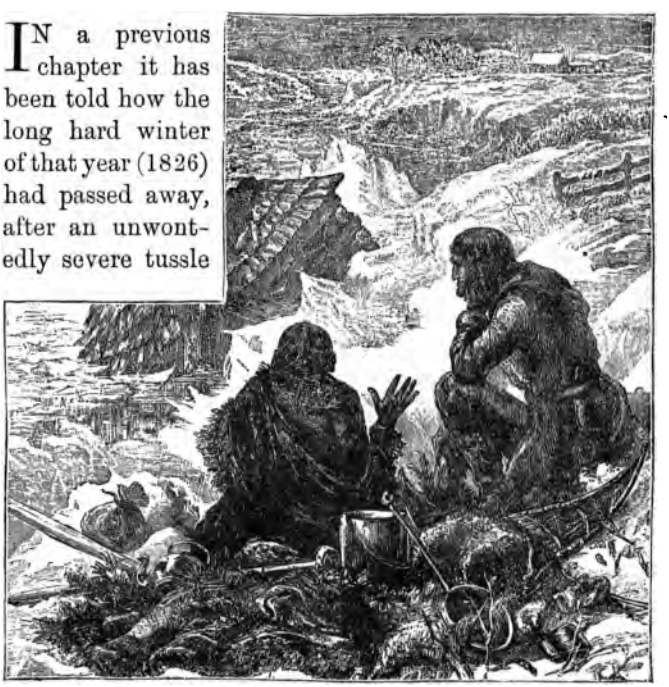
"How good of you, Vic! It was thoughtful of you, and kind. Put them down before me—a little nearer—there, —so."

Ian gazed in speechless admiration. It was not that he was vain of the achievement; he was too sensible and unselfish for that; but it was *such* a pleasure to think of being able, after all, and in spite of his bad shooting, to present Elsie with a set of claws that were greatly superior to those given to her mother by Louis Lambert—the finest, in short, that he had ever seen.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CUNNING DEVICE ENDS IN FAILURE FOLLOWED BY DESTRUCTION.

IN a previous chapter it has been told how the long hard winter of that year (1826) had passed away, after an unwontedly severe tussle



PEEGWISH WATCHES THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS HOME.

with the spring. The prophets of the land now began to hold up their heads and look owlishly wise, for their predictions were evidently about to be fulfilled.

Had not old Sam Ravenshaw said all through the winter that "something would come of it"? Was it not the daily remark of Angus Macdonald that such a state of things "could not go on for ever—what*ever*"? Had not Peegwish glared prophecy with a degree of solemnity that rendered words not only impossible, but unnecessary? and had not Miss Trim asserted that dreadful consequences of some sort were *sure* to follow?

Dreadful consequences did follow, and they began with a fine warm day. For a considerable time the fields of snow had been subjected to the influence of the blazing sun, and had been greatly diminished in depth. The day in question, however, was so very warm that Louis Lambert was induced to take his horse and gun with a view to wolf-hunting on the plains. The hard crust formed on the snow's surface by the partial meltings of early spring is sufficiently strong to bear the weight of a wolf, but will not support a horse. Wolves, therefore, roam about with ease and at will at that period, while horses are obliged to keep to beaten tracks. When, however, the thaws set in, the case is reversed. The wolf, with his short limbs, flounders laboriously in the drifts of soft snow, while the horse, with his long and powerful legs, can gallop in spite of these. Thus wolf-hunting becomes, for a time, possible.

Louis Lambert was fond of the chase. He was also fond of courting, and, resolving to combine the two, galloped away to the abode of old Ravenshaw. He had been there so often of late that he felt half ashamed of this early morning visit. Lovers easily find excuses for visits. He resolved to ask if Herr Winklemann had been

seen passing that morning, as he wished his companionship on the plains—the shallow deceiver!

"Good-morning, Cora," he said, on entering the hall.

Elsie, who stood at the window with her back to the door, turned quickly round.

"Oh, I beg pardon," he said, with a slightly confused air; "I thought you were Cora, and—"

"Well," interrupted Elsie, with a hurt look that accorded ill with a twinkle in her eyes; "I think you might know the difference between me and Cora by this time, though you only saw my back."

"Ah, Elsie!" returned the youth, as he shook hands, "you ought in fairness to make allowance for the effects of spring. You know full well that the glare of the sun on the snow half blinds a fellow, so that even when, when—"

"Come, now, don't search about in your empty brain for one of your unmeaning compliments, but say at once what brings you here at so early an hour. Has a war-party of Sioux come down on us, or is the river about to break up?"

"War-parties of Sioux are no doubt prowling about the plains somewhere," returned Lambert, with a smile, "and the ice will go soon if this heat continues; but neither of these things brought me here. The truth is, I came to ask if Winklemann has been seen to pass your windows this morning?"

"The truth?" repeated Elsie, with a searching look.

"Well," replied the youth, with a laugh, "I came also to see you and—and—Cora."

"And father also, I suppose?"

"Why, Elsie, you are unusually sharp this morning; but I really do wish to know if Winklemann has been seen, because he had left home when I passed his house, and I want him to hunt with me."

"Then I may tell you that he passed our window not ten minutes before your arrival, going in the direction of the Lower Fort. He rides fast, as you know, so if you would catch him up you must follow quickly."

The young man stood for a moment undecided, then, perceiving that Elsie gave him no encouragement to remain, he bade her adieu and rode away.

"Louis is remarkably fond of coming here," said Elsie to Cora, who entered the room a few minutes later, "but he did not come to see *us* this morning. He only came to ask after Herr Winklemann."

Cora laughed, but gave no further evidence of the state of her mind.

Just then Peegwish the Indian entered. He walked towards the sisters with that solemn dignity of manner peculiar to the North American savage, but the intensified solemnity of his looks and a certain unsteadiness in his gait rather marred the dignity.

"Peegwish," said Elsie, going towards him with a grieved look, "you have been drinking beer again."

The Indian protested, in very bad English, that he had not tasted beer since the previous Christmas; whereupon Elsie proceeded to administer an earnest reproof to the muddled hypocrite, for she was really anxious to save him from the destruction which had already overtaken many of his red brethren through the baleful influence of fire-water; but Peegwish was just then in no condition to appreciate her remarks. To all she said his only reply was that he wanted "bally."

"You want bally?" returned Elsie, with a puzzled look.

"Yis—bally," he repeated, and a gleam of indescribable slyness broke like a sunbeam on his solemn visage as he said it.

"What *can* he mean by bally, Cora?"

"Perhaps he means barley."

"Ho!" exclaimed the Indian, with emphasis, by which he meant, "You're right."

But Elsie had no barley to give him. She tried to find out what he wanted to do with the barley, but Peegwish was not communicative. The gleam of cunning faded from his mahogany countenance, and he relapsed into a state of impenetrable wisdom, in which condition he retired, and betook himself to the upper part of the settlement, near Fort Garry, in quest of "bally." Here he found the people in a state of considerable excitement owing to the sudden and unusual rise of the river.

At Fort Garry the Assinaboine River joins the Red River, and flows with it into Lake Winnipeg. At the period of which we write (the month of May) both rivers were yet covered with the icy garment—between four and five feet thick—under which they had gone to rest five or six months before. The vast accumulation of snow which had fallen that winter was melted so fast that the Red River had risen with terrible rapidity, and it was obvious, from the ominous complainings of the "thick-ribbed ice," that a burst-up of unwonted violence was impending. The strength of the ice, however, was so great that it rose with the swelling waters without breaking until nearly on a level with the top of the river banks. In some places, where the banks were low, the pent-up floods broke forth and swamped the land, but as yet little damage had been done.

Of course the alarm of the settlers was considerable. Rumours of former floods which had devastated the surrounding plains were rife, and those of the people whose houses stood on the lower grounds began to remove their goods and chattels to higher places. Others delayed doing so in the belief that the river would not rise much higher,

at all events that it would subside as soon as the ice broke up and cleared away to Lake Winnipeg. Some there were whose dwellings stood on high ground, and who professed to have no belief in floods at all.

In other circumstances Peegwish would have noted the state of things that prevailed, but at that time his faculties were steeped in beer. For some days past they had been in this condition, but his supply was exhausted, and people who knew his propensity refused to give him more. Peegwish, therefore, being a somewhat resolute savage, resolved to adopt a course which would render him independent. Chuckling to himself at the depth and cunning of his intended course of action, he went among the farmers begging for "bally"! Some to whom he appealed treated him facetiously, others turned him away from their doors, being too anxious about the impending flood to listen to him. At last he found a soft-hearted soul in the person of Michel Rollin's mother, old Liz, who dwelt in a very small log-hut on a knoll at a considerable height above the river.

"What d'ee want wi' the barley?" demanded old Liz, who, besides being amiable, had a feeling of kindness for the man with whom her absent son had for years been in the habit of hunting.

"To heat 'im," replied the Indian.

"To eat it," echoed the sturdy little woman; "weel, come in. I can spare some, but dinna mak' a noise, Daddy's sleepin'."

The savage entered with solemn though wavering caution. Old though she was, Liz had a living father. He was so very ancient, that if he had dwelt in Egypt he would probably have been taken for a live mummy. He sat in the chimney corner, in an arm-chair to which Liz had tied him to prevent his falling into the fire. He

smiled and nodded at the fire when awake, and snored and nodded at it when asleep. Beyond this, and a grateful recognition of his daughter's attentions, he did and said nothing. Gazing at Daddy, Peegwish fell into an owlish reverie, from which he was aroused by old Liz putting a small sack of barley on the ground before him. The Indian received it with thanks, threw it on his shoulder, and with an expression of unalterable determination on his visage, returned to his own home.

The home of Peegwish was dilapidated like himself. It stood on a portion of ground belonging to Angus Macdonald, and was very near to the river's brink. It was a mere log-cabin of the smallest dimensions, having one low door and one glassless window. The window also served the purpose of a chimney. Its furniture was in keeping with its appearance—a stool, a couple of blankets, two little heaps of brushwood for beds, a kettle or two, a bag of pemmican, an old flint gun, two pairs of snow-shoes, a pair of canoe-paddles, a couple of very dirty bundles, and an old female. The latter was the dirtiest piece of furniture in the establishment. She was sister to Peegwish, and was named by him Wildcat.

Despite appearances, the hut was comfortably warm, for Wildcat—who, to do her justice, had been grossly misnamed—was fond of heat. She devoted the chief part of her existence to the collection of fuel, most of the remainder being spent in making moccasins, etc., and cooking.

"Put on the pot, Wildcat," said Peegwish on entering, as he threw down the sack of barley.

The woman obeyed with alacrity. The fire burned on the earthen floor in primitive style. Erecting three sticks over it in the tripod form, she hung a pot therefrom, filled it with water, and awaited further orders. Knowing her

brother's cast of mind well, she refrained from questioning, though she perceived from the peculiar cunning of his looks that something unusual occupied his mind. Peegwish saw that Wildcat's curiosity was aroused, and resolved to keep it in that condition. He had learned the fact that beer was made from barley, and had resolved, thenceforth, to brew his own beer; but no hint of this did he permit to escape him. He even went to the other extreme, and became unusually communicative on subjects remote from beer. He told how that the people up the river were being frightened by the rise in the water; how he had met Lambert and Winklemann going to hunt wolves; how these Nimrods had been obliged to change their minds and turn back for the purpose of looking after their property; and, in short, he wandered as far from the subject of beer and brewing as possible.

His reference to the rise of the river, however, turned Wildcat's thoughts to the fact that the ice in their immediate neighbourhood had been forced up in a manner that caused her some anxiety. She mentioned her fears to Peegwish, but that worthy was too deeply immersed in his experiments just then to care much for anything else. To her remarks he merely replied by a solemn shake of the head and an owlish gaze into the big pot.

Soon the water in the pot began to boil. Peegwish put in a large proportion of barley, lighted his pipe, and sat down to await the result with the patience of a Stoic. Wildcat sat beside him with equal patience. An hour passed, Peegwish dipped a wooden spoon into the pot and tasted. The result was not satisfactory—it burnt his lips. He let the spoonful cool, and tried again. The liquid was marvellously like barley-broth, with which delicacy he was well acquainted. Another hour passed; again he dipped the spoon, and again met with disappointment, for

his brew was not yet beer. The sun went down, the moon arose, the stars came out, and still Peegwish and Wildcat sat watching and dozing over the big pot.

At last the former bade the latter watch alone while he slept. He lay back where he sat and slumbered instantly. Wildcat obeyed orders by heaping fresh logs on the fire and following suit. They snored in concert.

The night advanced; the uneasy grindings of the ice increased; the tinkling of a thousand snow-born rills filled the air with liquid melody. The sub-glacial murmuring of many waters filled many hearts with anxious care, and numerous households near the river's brink sat up the live-long night to watch—perhaps to pray. Intermittent cracking of the ice kept up the sound, as it were, of spattering musketry, and occasional loud reports were interspersed like the thunder of heavy guns.

At grey dawn Peegwish awoke, looked slowly round, observed his sister asleep, and seized her by the nose. She awoke, rose hastily, and stirred the fire. An inspection of the big pot showed that its contents had become barley porridge. Even Peegwish's imagination failed to regard it as beer. But Peegwish had been somewhat sobered by his sleep. Hearing the ominous sounds on the river he jumped up and ran outside. The sight that presented itself was sufficiently alarming. During the night the water had risen six feet, and the ice had been raised to a level with the floor of the Indian's hut. But this was not the worst. A short tongue of land just above the hut had up to that time formed a sort of breakwater to the dwelling. Now, however, the ice had been forced quite over the barrier by the irresistible pressure behind, and even while he gazed a great wedge of ice, nearly five feet thick and several yards in length, was being reared up like a glittering obelisk, and forced slowly but surely down upon the hut.

Peegwish had not recovered from his first surprise when the obelisk broke off by its own weight and fell in a mass of ruins, whilst the ice behind kept thrusting with terrible force towards him.

If Peegwish was sluggish by nature his malady was evidently not incurable. He uttered a shout, and leaped back into his hut like a panther. His sister came out, gave one glance at the river, became wild-cattish for the first time in her life, and sprang after her brother.

A few seconds later and the pair reappeared, bearing some of their poor possessions to a place of safety higher up the bank. They returned for more, and in a very few minutes had the whole of their worldly wealth removed from their doomed edifice. Then they sat down on the bank, and sadly watched the destruction of their home.

From their point of view they could see that the main body of ice on the river was still unbroken, and that it was merely a huge tongue, or needle, which had been thrust up at that point by the form of the land above referred to. The shattered masses were soon forced against the side of the hut. There was a slight pause and a creaking of timbers; then the ice slipped upwards and rose above the roof. More ice came down from above—slowly grinding. Again there was a pause. The creaking timbers began to groan, the hut leaned gently over. One of the door-posts snapped, the other sloped inwards, the roof collapsed, the sides went in, the ice passed over all, and the hut of Peegwish was finally obliterated from off the face of the earth. So, a giant with his foot might slowly and effectually crush the mansion of a snail!

CHAPTER XIV

THE FLOOD BEGINS TO DO ITS WORK.

"IT is very sad that the hut of poor Peegwish has been carried away," observed Miss Martha Macdonald, while presiding at the breakfast-table.

"Yes, it iss fery sad," responded Angus Macdonald, in a somewhat unamiable tone; "but it iss more sad that he will pe living in our kitchen now, for that wuman Wildcat must pe there too, and it iss not coot for Wildcat to live in the kitchen. She will pe too fond of the kitchen altogether, an' she will pe a greater thief than our own cawtie, for she is more omniferous an' not so easy to scare."

"But cook is as good as a weasel at watching cats," returned Martha, with a smile; "and it is reason we have to be thankful we have no heavier trouble, Angus, for many of the people up the river are driven out of their houses."

"What you say iss true, Martha. Just pefore breakfast I met that Cherman crater, Winklemann, ridin' to the mission-house for help. The ice would pe scrapin' the end of his gardin, he was tellin' me, an' if the ruver would pe risin' another fut it would come into the house. He says the people are goin' off to the mountain like flocks of sheep, carryin' their coots and trivin' their cattle pefore them. It is fery pad times, whatever."

In the parlour of Willow Creek House the breakfast party enlarged on the same theme.

"Things look serious," observed Samuel Ravenshaw, as he commenced his third egg. "If the water rises at this rate much longer, not only the houses that stand low on the river banks, but the whole settlement will be in danger. It is said that four houses and a barn were swept away last night by the force of the ice somewhere above the mission premises, and that about sixty people slept in the church."

"It is well that our house stands high," said Mrs. Ravenshaw. "Don't you think, Sam, that we might have the barn prepared, in case some of our neighbours have to leave their houses?"

"The barn is ready, mother," said Elsie. "Father and I have been arranging it all the morning with the aid of Peegwish, poor fellow, who has been sent to us by Macdonald."

"Ay, and it's as trim as an hospital," added Mr. Ravenshaw; "but I hope it won't be wanted. The ice is now clearing away. When it is gone, the river will be sure to fall.—Tell the boy to saddle the horse, Cora," continued the old gentleman, attacking his fourth egg. "I shall ride up to see how Winklemann gets on. Lambert is helping him."

"Is Lambert's own house safe?" asked Elsie, with a glance at her sister.

"Safe enough just now," replied her father; "for it stands much higher and further back."

"Don't forget old Liz Rollin," said Elsie. "Her hut stands high, but if things get worse she will be in danger, and there is no one to look after her, you know."

"No fear of my forgetting the mother of the man who is helping to search for my dear boy," returned Ravenshaw;

"besides, old Liz is not without friends. Both Louis and Winklemann have promised to keep their eyes on her."

This reference to the mother of Michel Rollin turned the thoughts of the party into a channel that was very familiar, for the lost Tony and his brother were seldom absent from their thoughts. Of late, however, they had ceased to talk much of the absent ones, because, as months flew by without any tidings, their anxieties increased, and as their fears increased they felt less inclined to talk hopefully. Long before the breaking up of the ice Mr. Ravenshaw had sent off an expedition at his own cost in search of the searchers. It consisted of a trusty Indian and two half-breeds. They were to cross the plains towards the Saskatchewan district, and make inquiries among the fur-traders there; but nothing had yet been heard of them, and although the face and figure of Tony were never absent from the old man's memory, his name was not now so frequently on his lips.

A sigh from Miss Trim revealed clearly the nature of *her* thoughts. Poor Miss Trim! Her occupation was almost gone since Tony's disappearance. Besides losing the terrible and specific task of teaching Tony his lessons, the amiable lady had lost the general duty of keeping Tony in order, putting right what Tony had put wrong, and, generally, undoing what Tony did. She also missed painfully those little daily attentions to her hands and shins, which were rendered necessary in consequence of Tony's activity with his nails and the toes of his boots, to say nothing of his teeth. For many weeks past—it seemed to her years—Miss Trim had not bandaged a cut, or fomented a bruise, or mollified a scratch with ointment. She absolutely felt as though she had suffered bereavement.

The silence which had descended on the breakfast-table was not broken until Mr. Ravenshaw's horse was reported

ready at the door. On his way to the main road the old gentleman had to pass close to the summer-house on the knoll so much coveted by Angus Macdonald. There he reined up a few minutes. The position commanded an extensive view, and the aspect of the river was sufficiently alarming. The ice, which by that time had broken up, was rolling and crashing along with inconceivable force before the impetuous torrent. The water had risen to such a height that the lower lands were completely inundated. That it was still rising was made obvious by the fact that the rolling masses at the river-sides were being thrust higher and higher on obstructing points, carrying bushes and trees before them. Even while he gazed a lofty elm that grew on a low part of Angus Macdonald's property was overthrown as if it had been a mere twig, and swept away. Several young maple and oak trees further down shared the same fate a few minutes later.

The house of Angus was full in view. It occupied a mound nearly, though not quite, as high as the knoll on which he stood, and was still, like his own dwelling, far above the reach of the raging flood. The spot where the hut of Peegwish had stood was by that time deep below the surface of the ice-torrent.

Mr. Ravenshaw did not remain long in contemplation. The weather, which had been stormy, became suddenly cold, and a blinding fall of sleet induced him to button his greatcoat up to the chin as he hastened away.

Arriving at the mission station after a gallop of several miles, he found a state of things which almost beggars description. Men, women, and children were hurrying to and fro, laden with their chief valuables, or driving carts loaded with household goods, which they deposited on the mission premises for safety, preparatory to the

desertion of houses, which was expected to take place on the morrow. Goods of every description were scattered about in wild confusion, for many of the people were half mad with alarm. The missionary, with his assistants, was doing his best to reduce the chaos to order.

Farther up the river Mr. Ravenshaw encountered Herr Winklemann bearing a huge arm-chair on his shoulders. "Mine hause is toomed!" he said.

"Doomed? I hope not. Where are you going with the chair?"

"To zee hause of old Liz."

Without waiting for a rejoinder the stout German hurried on, and was soon lost to view among the bushes. Ravenshaw followed him shortly afterwards, and found old Liz arranging and piling away the belongings of Winklemann, who, after depositing the arm-chair by the side of the fire opposite the corner occupied by Daddy, had returned to his doomed house for more. Anxious to know in what condition his friend's house was, the old gentleman took the road to it. The house of old Liz, as we have said, stood high, and well back from the river. It had been made a place of refuge by the nearest neighbours, and was not only filled but surrounded by goods and furniture, as well as live stock. A dense mass of willow bushes, by which the little hut was surrounded, completely shut out the view all round, except backward, in the direction of the prairie, so that Ravenshaw did not come in sight of the spot where the flood had already commenced its work of destruction until he had traversed a footpath for nearly a quarter of a mile. Many wet and weary settlers passed him, however, with their possessions on their backs, and here and there groups of women and children, to all of whom he gave a cheering word of hope and encouragement.

On clearing the bushes the full extent of desolation was presented to view. The river here had overflowed its banks, so that a large part of the country wore the aspect of a lake. Knolls and slight eminences, which in happier times had been scarcely observable, now stood boldly out as conspicuous islets, while many farmhouses were either partly submerged or stood on the margin of the rising waters which beat against them. There was a strong current in some places, elsewhere it was calm; but the river itself was clearly traceable by the turmoil of crashing ice and surging water which marked its course. Men and women were seen everywhere—in the water and out of it—loading carts or barrows with their property, and old people, with children, looked on and shivered, for the thermometer had fallen to five degrees below the freezing-point of Fahrenheit's scale, as indicated by the thermometer at the parsonage. The sleet had ceased, and the wind had fallen, but dark masses of clouds hurried athwart the lowering sky, and the dreary character of the scene was heightened by the poor cattle, which, being turned out of their warm places of shelter, stood on knolls or in the water and lowed piteously.

One of the most conspicuous objects of the scene, from Ravenshaw's point of view, was poor Winklemann's house —a small one which stood on a low spot already surrounded by water. In front of it was Winklemann himself, wading through the flood, without coat or hat, and carrying a large bundle in his arms.

"What have you got there?" asked Ravenshaw, as the German went staggering past.

"Mine moder," he replied, and hurried on.

Herr Winklemann had a mother—as old as the hills, according to his own report, and any one who beheld her feeble frame and wrinkled visage might well have believed

him. With tender regard for her welfare her stout son had refrained from removing or even alarming her until the last moment, partly from fear that fright and the removal might do her serious injury, and partly from the hope that the flood had reached its highest point; but when the danger to his dwelling became great he resolved to carry her to the hut of old Liz, and, as a preliminary step, had removed her old arm-chair, as we have seen, to be ready for her reception. On returning to the house, however, he found that a portion of the river-bank above had unexpectedly given way, diverging the flood a little in that part, so that his dwelling was already a foot deep in water. The old woman, however, lay safely on the bed where Winklemann had placed her, and was either unconscious of, or indifferent to what was going on. She did indeed look a little surprised when her son wrapped the blanket, on which she lay, completely round her, and took her up in his arms as if she had been a little child, but the look of surprise melted into a humorous smile as he drew the last fold over her face. She clearly believed it to be one of her dear boy's little practical jokes, and submitted without a murmur.

Staggering through the flood with her, as we have said, Winklemann carried her to the cottage of old Liz, who received her with tender care, helped to place her in the big chair, and remembering Daddy's tendency to fall into the fire, tied her securely therein.

Meanwhile Winklemann ran back to his house, where he found Mr. Ravenshaw and Louis Lambert assisting several men to secure it on its foundations by tying it with ropes to the nearest trees.

Joining these, he lent his powerful aid; but a power greater than his was at work, which could not be resisted. Not only did the water rise at an alarming rate and rush

against the house with tremendous violence, but great cakes of ice bore down on it and struck it with such force as to make every timber tremble. Like all the other houses of the settlement, it was built entirely of wood, and had no other foundation than the levelled ground on which its framework stood.

When the water rose considerably above his knees, and ice-floes threatened to sweep him away, Mr. Ravenshaw thought it was time for an elderly gentleman to retire. The others continued for some time longer securing the ropes and, with poles, turning aside the ice; but ere long they also were driven to the higher ground, and compelled to stand idly by and watch the work of destruction.

"You've got everything out, I fancy?" asked Lambert.

"Everyt'ing," replied Winklemann, with a deep sigh; "not'ing is left but zee hause."

"An' that won't be left long," observed Mr. Ravenshaw, as a huge mass of ice went against its gable-end like a battering-ram.

It seemed to be the leader of a fresh battalion of the destroyer. A succession of ice-floes ran against the house and trees to which it was fastened. An additional rush of water came down at the same time like a wave of the sea. Every one saw that the approaching power was irresistible. The wave, with its ice-laden crest, absolutely roared as it engulfed the bushes. Two goodly elms bowed their heads into the flood and snapped off. The ropes parted like packthread; the building slewed round, reeled for a moment with a drunken air, caught on a shallow spot, and hung there.

"Ach! mine goot old hause—farvell!" exclaimed Winklemann, in tones of deepest pathos.

The house bowed as if in recognition of the old familiar

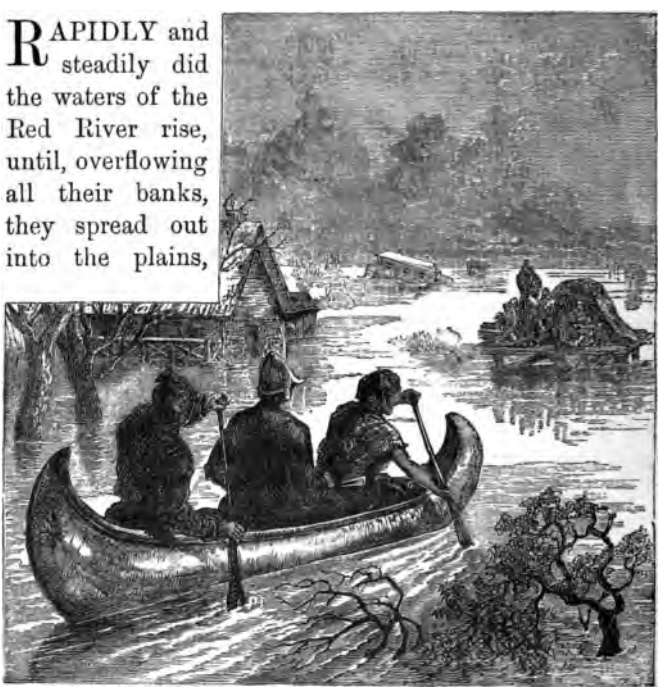
voice, sloped into deeper water, gurgled out its latest breath, like a living thing, through its doors and windows, and sank beneath the wreck and ruin of its old surroundings.

It was what men aptly term a clean sweep, but Winklemann's was not the only house that succumbed to the flood on that occasion. Many besides himself were rendered homeless. That night (the 4th of May) the waters rose four feet, and the settlers even on the higher grounds began to think of flight.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FLOOD CONTINUES TO DO ITS WORK.

RAPIDLY and steadily did the waters of the Red River rise, until, overflowing all their banks, they spread out into the plains,



AN EXPLORING PARTY

and gradually settler after settler retired before the deluge, each forsaking his home at the last moment, and going off in quest of higher ground with his cattle and property.

These high places were not numerous, for the whole region was very level. Many settlers discovered at that time a number of features in the colony which had been unrecognised before, and found refuge on spots which had never been observed as lying above the dead level of the plains. Even these spots were not all safe. Many of them were speedily submerged, and those who had fled to them sought refuge on the still higher knolls, which soon became inconveniently crowded. Some miles from the river there was an elevation of ground named the "Little Mountain," and to this many of the people repaired. It was about as deserving of its title as is a molehill; nevertheless it proved a safe asylum in the end.

Louis Lambert was driven from his home the day after that on which the house of his friend Winklemann was destroyed. His house was a stout one of two storeys, and, owing to its position, was less exposed to the current of the flood than many other dwellings. Confident of its strength and the security of its position, its owner had carried all his goods and furniture to the upper storey, but on returning, after assisting his friend, he found the water in it so high that he feared it might be set afloat—as some of the houses had already been—and finally made up his mind to remove. But where should he remove to? That was the question.

"To zee hause of old Liz," observed his friend. "It is close to hand, an' zere is yet room."

This was true, but Lambert's inclinations turned in the direction of Willow Creek; he therefore protested there was *not* room.

"No, no," he said; "it's not fair to crowd round old Liz as

we are doing. I 'll ride down to Ravenshaw's and see if there is room on his ground to place my property. There will be plenty of time. Even if the water should go on rising, which I hope it won't, my house can't float for many hours. Meanwhile, if you 'll fetch round the boat, and place some of the heavy goods in it, you 'll be doing me a good turn."

"Vell, vell," muttered the German, as he looked after his friend with a quiet smile and a shake of the head, "dere is no madness like lof! Ven a man falls in lof he becomes blind, qvite blind!"

The blind one, meanwhile, mounted his steed and galloped away on the wings of "lof." Lambert was a reckless rider, and an impatient though good-natured fellow. He dashed at full speed through shallow places, where the floods were creeping with insidious, tide-like persistency over the farm-lands, and forded some of the creeks, which almost rendered swimming unavoidable; but in spite of his daring he was compelled to make many a vexatious détour in his headlong course down to Willow Creek. On the way his mind, pre-occupied though it was, could not escape being much affected by the scenes of devastation through which he passed. Everywhere near the river houses were to be seen standing several feet deep in water, while their owners were either engaged in conveying their contents in boats and canoes to the nearest eminences, or removing them from such eminences in carts to spots of greater security. Some of the owners of these deserted houses had become so reckless or so despairing under their misfortunes, that they offered to sell them for merely nominal sums. It is said that some of them changed hands for so small a sum as thirty shillings or two pounds.

Cantering round the corner of a fence, Lambert came

within a hundred yards of a house round which the water was deep enough to float a large boat. Here he observed his friends, John Flett and David Mowat, embarking household goods into a large canoe out of the parlour window. Riding into the water, Lambert hailed them.

"Hallo, Flett, d'ee want help?"

"Thank 'ee, no; this is the last load. Got all the rest down to the church; the minister is lettin' us stow things in the loft."

"You're in too great haste, Flett," returned Lambert. "The water can't rise much higher; your place is sure to stand."

"Not so sure o' that, Louis; there's a report brought in by a redskin that all the country between the sources of the Assinaboine and Missouri is turned into a sea, and the waters o' the Missouri itself are passing down to Lake Winnipeg. He says, too, that a whole village of redskins has been swept away."

"Bah! it's not true," said Lambert.

"True or false," rejoined Flett, resuming his work, "it's time for me to clear out o' this."

Forsaking the road, which he had hitherto attempted to follow, Lambert now stretched out at full gallop into the plains. He came to a small creek and found that the simple wooden bridge had been washed away, and that the waters of the river were driving its tiny current in the wrong direction. In a fit of impatience he applied the whip to his steed, which, being a fiery one, rushed furiously at the creek. Fire does not necessarily give an untrained horse power to leap. The animal made an awkward attempt to stop, failed, made a still more awkward attempt to jump, failed again, and stumbled headlong into the creek, out of which he and his master scrambled on the opposite side.

Lambert shook himself, laughed, leaped into the saddle, and went off again at full speed. He came to the mission station, but did not stop there. It still stood high above the waters, and was crowded with settlers. Not far from it was a spot of rising ground, which was covered with more than a hundred tents and wigwams belonging to Canadian and half-breed families. Passing on, he came upon other scenes of destruction, and finally arrived at the abode of old Mr. Ravenshaw. It, like the mission premises, still stood high above the rising flood. The family were assembled in the chief sitting-room, old Ravenshaw enjoying a pipe, while the ladies were variously occupied around him.

"You've heard the report brought by the Indian about the flood, I fancy?"

"Oh, yes; but I give no ear to reports," said the old gentleman, emitting an indignant puff of smoke; "they often end like *that*."

"True; nevertheless, it's as well to be prepared," said Lambert, with a glance at Elsie and Cora, who sat together near the window; "and I've come to beg for house-room for my goods and chattels, for the old house is not so safe as I had thought."

"There's plenty of room in the barn for people in distress," said Elsie, with a glance at her sister.

"Or in the cow-house," added Cora, with a laugh and a slight toss of her head; "we've had the cattle removed on purpose to make room for you."

"How considerate! And the cow-house of Willow Creek, with its pleasant associations, is a palace compared to the hall of any other mansion," said the gallant Louis.

A crash was heard outside just then. On looking from the windows, a great cake of ice about five feet thick, with a point like a church spire, was seen attempting, as

it were, to leap the lower end of the garden-fence. It failed; but on making a second attempt was more successful. The fence went slowly down, and the spire laid its head among the vegetables, or rather on the spot where the vegetables would have been had the season been propitious. It was accompanied by a rush of water.

The sight was viewed with comparative composure by old Mr. Ravenshaw, but his better half took it less quietly, and declared that they would all be drowned.

"I hope not!" exclaimed Miss Trim fervently, clasping her hands.

"We're high and dry just now, Louis," said Mr. Ravenshaw gravely, "but Willow Creek won't be a place of refuge long if the rise goes on at this rate. See, my neighbour is beginning to show signs of uneasiness, though the ground on which he stands is not much lower than my own."

As he spoke, the old fur-trader pointed to the house of Angus Macdonald, where a large cart was being loaded with his property.

Angus himself entered at the moment to beg leave to remove some of his valuables to his friend's barn.

"It iss not the danger, you see, Muster Ruvnshaw, that troubles me; it iss the watter. There are some things, as the leddies fery well know, will pe quite destroyed py watter, an' it is puttin' them out of harm's way that I will pe after."

"Put whatever you like in the barn, Macdonald," said Mr. Ravenshaw promptly; "Elsie and I have had it and the other outhouses prepared. You are heartily welcome. I hope, however, that the water won't rise much higher."

"The watter will rise higher, Muster Ruvnshaw," returned Angus, with the decision of an oracle; "an' it will pe goot for us if it will leave our houses standin'

where they are. Peegwish will be tellin' me that; an' I'eegwish knows what he iss apout when he is not trunk, whatever."

Peegwish did indeed know what he was about. At the very time that Angus was speaking about him, Peegwish, feeling convinced that Macdonald's house was in danger, was on his way to the mission station, which he knew to be a place of greater safety, and where he felt sure of a welcome, for the Rev. Mr. Cockran—in charge at the time—had a weakness for the old hypocrite, and entertained strong hopes of bringing about his reformation. For two days he stayed in the parsonage kitchen, smoking his pipe, revelling in the odds and ends, such as knuckle-bones, stray bits of fat and tripe, which fell to his lot, and proudly exhibiting himself in one of the minister's cast-off black coats, which contrasted rather oddly with a pair of ornamented blue leggings and a scarlet sash. When not busy in the kitchen, he went about among the homeless settlers assembled round the mission, sometimes rendering a little help, oftener causing a good deal of obstruction, and vainly endeavouring to obtain beer, while he meditated sadly now and then on his failure in the brewing line.

At the end of these two days, however, a great change took place at the mission station, for the flood continued steadily to increase until it reached the church and parsonage, and drove the hundreds of people who had assembled there away to the more distant knolls on the plains. Mr. Cockran, with his household and Sabbath-scholars, besides a few of the people, resolved to stick to the church as long as it should stick to the ground, and Peegwish remained with them. He had unbounded confidence in the good missionary, and still more unbounded confidence in the resources of the parsonage kitchen. Wildcat was similarly impressed.

At last the water rose to the church itself and beat against the foundations of the parsonage, for the current was very strong and had carried away some of the fences. All the people were thus obliged to take refuge in the church itself, or in the parsonage.

On the 13th of May there were very few dry spots visible on or near the banks of the Red River. Dozens of houses had been carried away, and were either destroyed or stranded on localities far from their original sites. As far as the eye could reach, the whole region had been converted into a mighty lake, or rather sea; for in the direction of the plains the waters seemed to join the horizon. Everywhere this sea was studded with islets and knolls, which grew fewer and smaller as the floods increased. Here and there piles of floating firewood looked like boats with square-sails in the distance, while deserted huts passed over the plains with the stream like fleets of Noah's arks!

When the water began to touch the parsonage, its owner gave orders to collect timber and make preparation for the erection of a strong stage as a final place of refuge.

"Come," said he to Peegwish, when his orders were being carried out; "come, get your canoe, Peegwish, and we will pay a visit to the poor fellows on the knoll up the river."

The Indian waded to a spot close by, where his canoe was fastened to a post, and brought it to the door, after the fashion of a gondolier of Venice. The faithful Wildcat took the bow paddle; the clergyman stepped into the middle of the craft and sat down.

They shot swiftly away, and were soon out of sight. The day was calm and warm, but the sky had a lurid, heavy appearance, which seemed to indicate the approach of bad weather. Paddling carefully along to avoid running

against sunk fences, they soon came into the open plains, and felt as though they had passed out upon the broad bosom of Lake Winnipeg itself. Far up the river—whose course was by that time chiefly discernible by empty houses, and trees, as well as bushes, half submerged—they came in sight of a stage which had been erected beside a cottage. It stood only eighteen inches out of the water, and here several women and children were found engaged in singing Watts' hymns. They seemed quite comfortable, under a sort of tarpaulin tent, with plenty to eat, and declined to be taken off, though their visitors offered to remove them one at a time, the canoe being unable to take more. Further up, the voyagers came to the hut of old Liz.

This hut was by that time so nearly touched by the water that all the people who had formerly crowded round it had forsaken it and made for the so-called mountain. Only Liz herself remained, and Herr Winklemann, to take care of their respective parents.

"Do you think it safe to stay?" asked the clergyman, as he was about to leave.

"Safe, ya; qvite safe. Besides, I have big canoe, vich can holt us all."

"Good-bye, then, and remember, if you want anything that I can give you, just paddle down to the station and ask for it. Say I sent you."

"Ya, I vill go down," said Herr Winklemann gratefully.

And Herr Winklemann *did* go down, much to his own subsequent discomfiture and sorrow, as we shall see.

Meanwhile Mr. Cockran reached the knoll which he had set out to visit. It was of considerable extent, and crowded with a very miscellaneous, noisy, and quarrelsome crew, of all sorts, ages, and colours, in tents and wigwams and extemporised shelters.

They received the clergyman heartily, however, and

were much benefited by his visit, as was made apparent by the complete though temporary cessation of quarrelling.

The elements, however, began to quarrel that evening. Mr. Cockran had intended to return home, but a gale of contrary wind stopped him, and he was fain to accept the hospitality of a farmer's tent. That night the storm raged with fury. Thunder and lightning added to the grandeur as well as to the discomfort of the scene. Some time after midnight a gust of wind of extreme fury threw down the farmer's tent, and the pole hit the farmer on the nose! Thus rudely roused, he sprang up and accidentally knocked down Peegwish, who happened to be in his way. They both fell on the minister, who, being a powerful man, caught them in a bear-like grasp and held them, under the impression that they had overturned the tent in a quarrel while he was asleep.

At that moment a cry of fire was raised. It was found that a spark from a tent which stood on the windward side of the camp had caught the long grass, and a terrestrial conflagration was added to the celestial commotions of the night. It was a moment of extreme peril, for the old grass was plentiful and sufficiently dry to burn. It is probable that the whole camp would have been destroyed but for a providential deluge of rain which fell at the time and effectually put the fire out.

Of course Mr. Cockran became very anxious about those he had left at home, for the storm had increased the danger of their position considerably. Happily, with the dawn the gale moderated. The improvement did not, indeed, render canoeing safe, for the white-crested waves of that temporary sea still lashed the shores of the new-made islet; but the case was urgent, therefore the clergyman launched his canoe, and, with Peegwish and the faithful Wildcat, steered for the station

CHAPTER XVI.

WINKLEMANN AND OLD LIZ GET INTO TROUBLE.

AT the parsonage, before the storm had fairly begun, the canoe party was thought of with considerable anxiety, for Mrs. Cockran knew how frail the craft was in which her husband had embarked, and among the sixty-three persons who had taken refuge with her not one was capable of taking command of the rest in a case of emergency. Great, therefore, was her satisfaction when Herr Winklemann appeared in his canoe with a request for a barrel of flour.

"You shall have one," said Mrs. Cockran, "and anything else you may require; but pray do not leave me to-night. I can give you a comfortable bed, and will let you go the moment my husband returns. I fully expect him this evening."

"Madam," answered the gallant Winklemann, with a perplexed look, "you is vere goot, bot de gale vill be rise qvickly, an' I dares not leaf mine moder vidout protection."

"Oh! but just stay for an hour or two," entreated Mrs. Cockran, "and show the people how to go on with the stage. Perhaps my husband may return sooner than we expect. Perhaps the storm may not come on; many such threatenings, you know, come to nothing."

Winklemann looked anxiously up at the sky and shook

his head, but the entreaties of the lady prevailed. The good-natured German consented to remain for a "ver leetle" time, and at once set about urging on and directing the erection of the stage. This stage was planned to be a substantial platform about thirty feet square, supported on posts firmly driven into the ground, so that the water might pass freely under it. In the event of the parsonage becoming untenable it would form a refuge of comparative safety.

It was while Winklemann was busily engaged on the stage that the storm broke forth which compelled the clergyman to spend the night on the islet, as already described. Of course the storm also forced Winklemann to remain at the station. But that impulsive youth's regard for his "moder" would not permit of his giving in without a struggle. When he saw that the gale increased rapidly, he resolved to start off without delay. He launched his canoe; a half-breed in his employment managed the bow paddle, but they found that their united strength was insufficient to drive the craft more than a hundred yards against wind and waves. Returning to the station, Winklemann engaged two additional men to aid him, but the increasing gale neutralised the extra force. After a vain struggle the canoe was hurled back on the knoll, a wave caught the bow, overturned it, and threw the men into the water at the very door of the parsonage.

The canoe was partially broken. Time was required to repair it. Time also gave the gale opportunity to gather power, and thus the chafing German was compelled to spend the night at the station.

Meanwhile, those men whom he had left behind him spent a terrible night, but the brunt of the trouble fell upon old Liz.

Poor old Liz! She was a squat piece of indomitable energy, utterly regardless of herself and earnestly solicitous about every one else.

When the storm commenced, her dwelling had begun to show symptoms of instability. This fact she carefully concealed from Daddy and old Mrs. Winklemann, who remained in their respective chairs smiling at each other, for both were accustomed to good treatment from their children, and regarded life in general from a sunny point of view. They knew that something very unusual was going on, but the old frau said—or thought—to herself, "My boy will look after me!" while Daddy said, or thought, "Liz knows all about it." Happy trustful spirits! Enviable pair!

Having informed the pair that she was going away for a minute or two to look after something outside, old Liz left them. She found herself up to the knees in water, of course, the moment she passed the doorway. From an outhouse she procured a strong rope. This she fastened to a large iron ring in the side of the hut, and attached the other end to a thick tree whose branches overshadowed it. Even during the brief time she was thus engaged the flood increased so rapidly, and the rising wind blew so wildly, that the poor creature was almost carried off her short legs. But old Liz had a powerful will, and was strong-hearted. Having accomplished her object, and lost for ever her frilled cap in so doing, she struggled back towards the door of the hut. A passing billet of firewood tripped her up and sent her headlong into the flood. She disappeared, but emerged instantly, with glaring eyes, gasping mouth, and streaming hair. A resolute rush brought her to the door-step; she seized the door-post, and was saved.

"Hech! but it's an awfu' time," gasped old Liz, as she

wrung the water from her garments.—"Comin', Daddy! I'll be there this meenit. I've gotten mysel' a wee wat."

"What's wrang?" asked Daddy, in a feeble voice, as his ancient daughter entered.

"It's only a bit spate, Daddy. The hoose is a'maist soomin', but ye've nae need to fear."

"I'm no' feared, Liz. What wad I be feared o' whan ye're there?"

"Ver is mine boy?" demanded old Mrs. Winklemann, looking round.

"He's gane to the kirk for floor. Ne'er fash yer heed aboot *him*. He'll be back afore lang."

The old woman seemed content, though she did not understand a word of Liz's Scotch.

"Bless mine boy," she said, with a mild smile at Daddy, who replied with an amiable nod.

But this state of comparative comfort did not last long. In half an hour the water came over the threshold of the door and flooded the floor. Fortunately the old couple had their feet on wooden stools and thus escaped the first rush, but old Liz now felt that something must be done to keep them dry. There was a low table in the room. She dragged it out and placed it between the couple, who smiled, under the impression, no doubt, that they were about to have their evening meal.

"Daddy, I'm gaun to pit yer legs on the table. It'll be mair comfortabler, an 'll keep ye oot o' the wat."

Daddy submitted with a good grace, and felt more easy than usual, the table being very little higher than his chair. Mrs. Winklemann was equally submissive and pleased. Covering the two pairs of legs with a blanket, old Liz produced some bread and cheese, and served out rations thereof to keep their minds engaged. She plumed

herself not a little on the success of the table-and-legs device, but as the water rose rapidly she became anxious again, though not for herself. She waded about the hut with supreme indifference to the condition of her own lower limbs. At last she mounted upon the bed and watched, as the water rose inch by inch on the legs of the two chairs.

"What *wull* I do whan it grups them?" she muttered, experiencing that deep feeling of anticipation with which one might watch the gradual approach of fire to gunpowder.

The objects of her solicitude snored pleasantly in concert.

"It'll kill them wi' the cauld, to say naething o' the start," continued the old woman with deepening, almost desperate, anxiety. "Oh man, man, what for did ye leave us?"

This apostrophe was addressed to the absent Winklemann.

One inch more, five minutes longer, and the flood would reach the bodies of the old couple. Liz looked round wildly for some mode of delivering them, but looked in vain. Even if her strength had been adequate, there was no higher object in the room to which she could have lifted them. The bed, being a truckle one, and lower than the chairs, was already submerged, and old Liz herself was coolly, if not calmly, seated in two inches of water. At the very last moment deliverance came in an unexpected manner. There was a slight vibration in the timbers of the hut, then a sliding of the whole edifice. This was followed by a snap and a jolt: the ring-bolt or the rope had gone, and old Liz might, with perfect propriety, have exclaimed, in the words of the sea song, "I'm afloat! I'm afloat! and the Rover is free!"

For one moment her heart failed; she had read of Noah's ark, but had never quite believed in the stability of that mansion. Her want of faith was now rebuked, for the old hut floated admirably, as seamen might say, on an even keel. True, it committed a violent assault on a tree at starting, which sent it spinning round, and went crashing through a mass of drowned bushes, which rendered it again steady; but these mishaps only served to prove the seaworthiness of her ark, and in a few minutes the brave little woman revived. Splashing off the bed and spluttering across the room, she tried to open the door with a view to see what had happened and whither they were bound, for the two windows of the mansion were useless in this respect, being fitted with parchment instead of glass. But the door was fast, and refused to open.

"We 'll a' be lost!" exclaimed Daddy, in alarm, for he had been awakened by the shock against the tree, and was now slightly alive to their danger.

"Ver is mine boy?" asked the old frau, in a whimpering voice.

"Nae fear o' 'ee," said Liz, in a soothing tone. "Him that saved Noah can save us."

"Open the door an' see where we are, lassie," said the old man.

"It 'll no' open, Daddy."

"Try the wundy, then."

"I 'm sweer'd to break the wundy," said Liz. "Losh, man, I 'll try the lum!"

The chimney, to which old Liz referred, was capacious enough to admit a larger frame than hers. Moreover, it was a short one, and the fire had long ago been drowned out. With the enthusiasm of an explorer, the little woman stooped and entered the fire-place. She felt about inside for a few moments, and in doing so brought down an

enormous quantity of soot. Immediately there was a tremendous coughing in the chimney.

"Lassie! lassie! come oot. Ye'll be chokit," cried Daddy, in alarm.

"Hoots, man, haud yer gab," was the polite reply.

Liz was not to be easily turned from her purpose. Raising one leg up she found a crevice for her right foot, and the aged couple beheld the old creature, for the first time, in the attitude of a *danseuse*, standing on one toe. Next moment the remaining leg went up, and she disappeared from view. If there had been any one outside, the old woman would have been seen, two minutes later, to emerge from the chimney-top with the conventional aspect of a demon—as black as a Zulu chief, choking like a chimpanzee with influenza, and her hair blowing freely in the wind. Only those who have intelligently studied the appearance of chimney-sweeps can form a proper idea of her appearance, especially when she recovered breath and smiled, as she thought of her peculiar position.

But that position was one which would have damped the courage of any one except old Liz. The storm was beginning to grow furious; the sun, which had already set, was tinging the black and threatening clouds with dingy red. Far as the eye could reach, the once green prairie presented an angry sea, whose inky waves were crested and flecked with foam, and the current was drifting the hut away into the abyss of blackness that seemed to gape on the horizon.

"What see ye, Liz?" cried Daddy, bending a little, so as to send his voice up the chimney.

"I see naethin' but watter; watter everywhere," said Liz, unconsciously quoting the Ancient Mariner, and bending so as to send her reply down. She did more; she

lost her balance, and sent herself down to the bottom of the chimney, where she arrived in a sitting posture with a flop, perhaps we should say a squash, seeing that she alighted in water, which squirted violently all over her sooty person.

This sudden reappearance astonished the aged couple almost more than it surprised Liz herself, for she could not see herself as they saw her.

"Hech! but that *was* a klyte; but ne'er heed, Daddy. I 'm nane the waur. Eh, but I 'll ha'e to clean mysel'," said old Liz, rising slowly and going straight to a corner cupboard, whence she took a slab of soap, and began to apply it vigorously, using the entire room, so to speak, as a wash-tub. The result was unsatisfactory; beginning the process as a pure black, she only ended it as an impure mulatto, but she was content, and immediately after set herself to fasten the aged pair more securely in their chairs, and to arrange their limbs more comfortably on the table; after that she lighted a candle and sat down on the sloppy bed to watch.

Thus that household spent the night, rocked, as it were, on the cradle of the deep.

At daylight Herr Winklemann rose from his sleepless couch at the parsonage, and finding that the wind had moderated, launched his canoe. He left the mission station just an hour before Mr. Cockran returned to it.

Anxious was the heart of the poor youth as he wielded the paddle that morning, and many were the muttered remarks which he made to himself, in German, as he urged the canoe against wind and current. As he neared home his fears increased. On reaching a certain part from which he had been wont to descry the chimney of old Liz's hut, he perceived that the familiar object was gone, and uttered a mighty roar of horror.

The half-breed in the bow ceased paddling, and looked back in alarm.

"Git on, you brute!" shouted Winklemann, at the same time exerting his great strength as though he meant to urge the light craft out of the water into the air.

A few minutes more and they swept round into the space where the hut had once stood. There was nothing left but the bit of rope that had been made fast to the ring-bolt. Poor Winklemann let his paddle drop and sank almost double with his face in his hands.

"Mine moder," was all he could say, as he groaned heavily. In a few seconds he recovered with a start and bade the man in the bow paddle for his life.

Winklemann, of course, knew that the house must have floated downwards with the current, if it had not been utterly overwhelmed. He directed his search accordingly, but the breadth of land now covered by the flood caused the currents to vary in an uncertain manner, as every ridge, or knoll, or hollow in the plains modified them. Still, there could be only one general direction. After a few minutes of anxious reflection the bereaved man resolved to keep by the main current of the river. He was unfortunate in this, for the hut, in commencing its adventurous career, had gone off in the direction of the plains. All day he and his companion paddled about in search of the lost family, but in vain. At night they were forced to return to the parsonage for a little food and rest, so as to fit them for a renewal of the search on the following morning.

At the mission station they found Mr. Cockran, with his wife and forty of his people, established on the stage. Early in the day the water had burst into the parsonage, and soon stood a foot deep on the floor, so that the pastor deemed it high time to forsake it and take to the last

refuge. It was a crowded stage, and great was the anxiety of many of the mothers upon it lest their little ones should be thrust over the edge into the water. No such anxiety troubled the little ones themselves. With that freedom from care which is their high privilege, they even gambolled on the brink of destruction.

Next day was the Sabbath. To go to church was impossible. There were three and a half feet of water in that building. The day was fine, however, and sunny. The pastor, therefore, had service on the stage, and being an earnest, intelligent man, he made good use of the floods and the peculiarity of their circumstances to illustrate and enforce his discourse.

Long before the hour of worship had arrived, however, poor Winklemann went off in his canoe, and spent the whole of that day, as he spent several succeeding days, in anxious, diligent, hopeful, but finally despairing search for his lost old "moder."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WATERS STILL RISE, AND MISS TRIM COMES TO GRIEF.

ON the night of the 15th the gale broke out again with redoubled fury, and the stage at the mission station was shaken so much by the violence of the waves and wind that fears were entertained of its stability, despite its great strength. The water rose six inches during that night, and when the vast extent of the floods is taken into account, this rise was prodigious. The current was also so strong that it was feared the church itself, with the property and people in its loft, would be swept away.

Towards daylight a boat was seen approaching. It turned out to be that of Mr. Ravenshaw, containing himself and Lambert, with a crew from Willow Creek. The house of the old gentleman had, he said, much water in the lower rooms, so that he had been driven to its upper floor; but he felt sure of its strength, having himself helped to lay its foundations. Knowing the danger of those who dwelt in the parsonage, he had come to offer an asylum to as many as his house would hold. But Mr. Cockran declined to quit his post. The gale was by that time abating, the cheering daylight increasing; and as he had a large boat of his own moored to a neighbouring post, he preferred to remain where he was. Mr. Ravenshaw therefore ordered Louis to hoist the sail, and bidding adieu to the clerical party, returned to Willow Creek.

Of all the household there, Miss Trim had viewed the approach of the water with the greatest anxiety and Mrs. Ravenshaw with the greatest philosophy. Miss Trim, being an early riser, was the first to observe the enemy on the morning of its entrance. She came down-stairs and found the water entering the house quietly by the sides, oozing from under the boards and secretly creeping along till it covered the floors. She rushed up-stairs to alarm Mr. Ravenshaw, and met that active old gentleman coming down. He set to work at once to rescue his goods on the lower floor, while Miss Trim, in great excitement, went and roused the girls, who leaped up at once. Then she went to Mrs. Ravenshaw's room.

"Oh, Mrs. Ravenshaw, get up quick; the flood is coming in at last—over the floors—through the chinks—up the seams—everywhere—do—*do* get up! We shall all be—"

She stopped. A long-drawn sigh and a gentle "hush!" was all the reply vouchsafed by Mrs. Ravenshaw.

A quarter of an hour later Miss Trim came nervously back. "It's *rushing* in now like *any*thing! Oh, *do* get up! We may have to fly! The boards of the floor have been forced up, and they've had to take the door off its hinges—"

She stopped again. Mrs. Ravenshaw, with placid face and closed eyes, had replied with another gentle "hush-sh!"

Descending once more, Miss Trim was met by a sudden stream, which had burst in the back door. Rushing again into the old lady's bedroom, she cried vehemently "Woman! *won't* you get up?"

"Why should I?" asked the other in a sleepy tone. "Isn't Samuel looking after it?"

"Of course he is, but—"

"Well, well," interrupted the old lady, a little testily, "if *he's* there it's all right. *He* knows what to do, I don't. Neither do you, Miss Trim; so pray go away and let me sleep."

Poor Miss Trim retired discomfited. Afterwards when the family were driven to the upper storey of the dwelling she learned to regard things with something of Mrs. Ravenshaw's philosophy.

One morning at daylight there was a calm so profound that the sleepers at Willow Creek were not awakened until the sun rose in a cloudless sky and glittered over the new-born sea with ineffable splendour. It was a strange and sad though beautiful sight. Where these waters lay like a sheet of glass, spreading out to the scarce visible horizon, the grass-waves of the prairie had rolled in days gone by. There were still some knolls visible, some tops of trees and bushes, like islets on the sea, and one or two square masses of drift-wood floating slowly along with the now imperceptible current, like boats under full sail. Here and there could be seen several wooden houses and barns, some of which had come down from the upper parts of the settlement, like the hut of old Liz, and were stranded awkwardly on shoals, while others were still drifting over the watery waste.

All this was clearly visible from the windows of the upper room, in which slept the sisters Elsie and Cora, and presented itself to the former when she awoke like a vision of fairy-land. Unable to believe her eyes, she rubbed them with her pretty little knuckles, and gazed again.

"How beautiful!" she exclaimed.

The exclamation awoke Cora, who sat up and yawned. Then she looked at her sister, and being only half awake, smiled in an imbecile manner.

"Isn't it?" asked Elsie.

"Splendid!" replied Cora, turning to the windows. "Oh, I'm *so* sleepy!"

She sank on the pillow again and shut her eyes.

"Come, Cora, let us finish the discussion we began last night about Louis Lambert," said Elsie, with an arch smile.

"No, I won't! Let me sleep. I hate Louis Lambert!" said Cora, with a shake of her uppermost shoulder.

Elsie laughed and rose; she was already dressed. Mr. Ravenshaw had on the previous night ordered both his daughters to lie down in their clothes, as no one could tell what might happen to the house at any moment. The flood had not yet begun to abate; Elsie could tell that, as she sat arranging her hair, from the sound of water gurgling through the lower rooms.

We have said that the Ravenshaws had been driven by the floods to the upper floor of their residence. This floor consisted of three bedrooms and a lumber-room. One of the bedrooms was very small and belonged to the sisters, to whose sole use it was apportioned. For convenience, the other two rooms were set apart on this occasion as the male and the female rooms of the establishment, one being used by as many of the women as could get comfortably into it, the other by the men. The overflow of the household, including those neighbours who had sought refuge with the family, were accommodated in the adjoining barn, between which and the main building communication was kept up by means of a canoe, with Peegwish and Wildcat as the ferrymen. The lumber-room having had most of its lumber removed, was converted into a general hall, or *salon*, where the imprisoned family had their meals, received their friends, and discussed their trials. It was a rather dusty place, with

sloping roof, no ceiling, and cross-beams, that caused cross tempers in those who ran against them. In one corner a door, removed from its hinges, did duty as a dresser. In another Mr. Ravenshaw had erected a small stove, on which, being rather proud of his knowledge of cookery, he busied himself in spoiling a good deal of excellent food. A couple of planks, laid on two trunks, served for a table. Such cooking utensils and such portions of light furniture as were required had been brought up from the rooms below, that which was left having been weighted with large stones to prevent its being carried away, for the lower doors and windows had been removed to prevent their being driven in or out, as the case might be.

So complete was the destruction everywhere, that Samuel Ravenshaw had passed into a gleeful state of recklessness, and appeared to enjoy the fun of thus roughing it rather than otherwise, to the amusement of his amiable wife, who beheld his wasteful and daring culinary efforts without a murmur, and to the horror of Miss Trim, who was called upon to assist in and share the triumphs as well as the dangers of these efforts.

"Fetch the pepper now, Miss Trim. That's it, thank 'ee. —Hallo! I say, the top has come off that rascally thing, and half the contents have gone into the pan!"

He was engaged in frying a mess of pemmican and flour, of which provender he had secured enough to stand a siege of at least six months' duration.

"Never mind," he continued; "in with more flour and more pemmican. That's your sort. It'll make it taste more like curry, which is hot enough, in all conscience."

"But pepper is not like curry," said Miss Trim, who had a brother in India, and was consequently a second-hand authority on Indian affairs. "Curry is hot, no

doubt, and what one may call a seasoning; but it has not the flavour of pepper at all, and is not the colour of it, and—"

"Yes, yes, *I* know all about that, Miss Trim. Why, there's a box of it, isn't there, in the little cupboard on the stair? I quite forgot it. Fetch it, please, and we'll have real pemmican curry; and rouse up my lazy girls as you pass. Don't disturb Mrs. R., though. The proverb says, 'Let sleeping'—no, I don't mean *that* exactly. By the way, don't slip on the stair. The water's about up to that cupboard. Mind, there are six feet water or more in the passage now, and if—"

He stopped, for Miss Trim had already left the room, just as Lambert entered it.

The cupboard to which Miss Trim had been sent was an angular one, let into the wall to utilise a crooked corner. The step of the stair immediately below it was the last dry one of the flight. From that step to the bottom was held by the flood, which gurgled oilily through the deserted basement. Descending to that step with caution, and gazing anxiously at her own image reflected below, she opened the cupboard door.

Now, it chanced that Angus Macdonald's Cochin-China hen, having been driven from its own home by the flood, had strayed into Mr. Ravenshaw's house and established itself, uninvited, in the cupboard. It received Miss Trim with a croak of indignation and a flutter. Starting back with a slight "Oh!" the poor lady fell; and who shall adequately describe, or even imagine, the effects of that fall? Many a time had Miss Trim descended that stair and passage on her feet, but never until then had she done so on her back, like a mermaid or a seal! Coming to the surface immediately, she filled the house with a yell that almost choked the hearers, caused old Raven-

shaw to heave the pemmican curry into the lap of Lambert, and induced Lambert himself to leap downstairs to the rescue like a harlequin. The bold youth had to swim for it! A gurgle at the far end of the passage told where Miss Trim was going down, like wedding announcements, for the third and last time. Lambert went in like an otter, caught the lady in his arms, and bore her to the staircase, and thence to the upper floor in a few minutes. She was at once taken to the sisters' bedroom, and there restored to life and lamentation.

"My dear," said Mr. Ravenshaw to his wife when she appeared, "you'd better look after our breakfast —I've made a mess of it, and I'll go over to Angus Macdonald and invite him and his household to come and stay with us. Their house must be almost afloat by this time."

The old gentleman hailed Peegwish, who was outside in the canoe at the moment.

That would-be brewer at once made for the house, paddled his canoe through the doorway and up the passage to the staircase, where Wildcat, who managed the bow paddle, held on by the bannister while Mr. Ravenshaw embarked. Reissuing from the doorway, they made for their neighbour's residence.

Macdonald's house had indeed become almost uninhabitable. It stood so deep in the water that only the upper windows were visible. The chimneys and roofs of some of the outhouses formed, with the main building and a few tree-tops, a small Archipelago.

"You are fery kind, Mr. Ruvnshaw," said Angus from an upper window, beneath which the canoe floated. "It iss not improbaple that my house will pe goin' down the river like a poat, but that iss nothing—not anything at

all—when there will pe such a destruction goin' on all over the settlement what*ever*. It iss fery coot of you, oo ay. I will put my fuddle into the canoe, an' my sister she will pe ready at wance.—Wass you ready, Martha?"

A voice from the interior intimated that Miss Martha would be "ready in two minutes."

"Pe quick, then," said Macdonald, looking inwards while he lowered his violin, to which he was passionately attached, into the canoe, "you hef not much time to waste, Martha, for it wass time we will pe goin'."

In a few minutes Angus Macdonald's house was abandoned to its fate, and himself and sister, with a couple of domestics, were added to the number of refugees who crowded to the abode of hospitable Sam Ravenshaw.

"Hef you forgotten the cawtie?" asked Angus of his sister, while assisting her to land on the steps from which Miss Trim had taken her dive.

"No, Angus, I've got it in my basket, but I fear the poor old hen has been lost. It's all over the house I sought for it before comin' away, but—"

A triumphant cackle from the cupboard overhead interrupted Miss Martha.

"Ha! ha!" shouted Mr. Ravenshaw; "that's where the sound came from this morning! And I do believe it must have been that brute which caused Miss Trim to fall into the water.

With a twinkle in his eye, the old gentleman related the incident of the morning, while Angus, with a grim expression, kept his eye on Beauty, who gazed inquiringly out at the half-open door of her retreat.

"It iss a pad craitur you've peen—fery pad—ever since I got you, but it iss no more mischief you will pe dooin' after this—what*ever*."

Angus seized the unfortunate hen by the neck as he

spoke, and flung it along the passage, where it fell into the water, and went cackling and choking through the doorway.

Beauty's powers were varied as well as surprising. Although thus, for the first time in her life, compelled to take to the water, she swam as well as any duck, and went straight off, as if by instinct, to the forsaken house. From the window of the lumber-room Angus saw her reach it, scramble, somehow, on to its roof, and there utter a crow of defiance that would have done credit to her defunct husband. There was one other object besides his own house and surroundings which Angus saw from that window. It was the smoking-box on the willow-clad knoll, which formed a separate island in the flood. The sight stirred up unpleasant recollections. He turned from the window, and gave his attention to the substantial breakfast to which his host invited him.

The greater part of that day was spent in rearranging the habitable parts of Willow Creek, and placing the more delicate valuables further out of danger. At night candles were lighted, fresh wood was heaped up in the stove, and the lumber-room became comparatively comfortable.

"Will you play us a tune, Angus?" said Louis Lambert, drawing a stool between Elsie and Cora and sitting down. "The ladies, you know, never tire of your music."

"I hef not anything new," replied Angus, with becoming modesty; "but if the leddies wass willin' to listen to some o' the old tunes, my fuddle an' I will try what we can do."

"We love the old tunes best," said Cora.

As every one else echoed the sentiment, Angus, nothing loath, began to discourse sweet sounds, which, to say truth, were indeed very sweet, and mingled not inharmoniously with the sound of waters which gurgled gently underneath.

Angus could play Scotch reels in a manner tnat made dancing almost unavoidable, but he preferred slow, plaintive music, and on this occasion indulged his taste to the full, so as to fling a mantle of quiescence and pathos over the family circle.

Samuel Ravenshaw had retired to a darkish corner to enjoy his pipe, but the music awoke sad memories. The lost Tony came vividly before him, and beside his darling boy arose the dark form of the Red Man, whose mode of taking his revenge had been to him so terrible, all the more terrible that the nature of the old man was secretive in regard to sorrow. His joys he was ever ready to share with every one, but his griefs he smothered in his own breast, and scorned to let his countenance betray his heart.

No one knew how much he suffered. Perhaps Elsie understood him best. At all events she had become more earnest and thoughtful in her attentions after that dark day when her little brother was spirited away. Leaving Lambert to Cora, she went over to her father, sat down beside him, and, laying her head upon his shoulder, listened with a sort of melancholy pleasure to the sweet strains of the violin.

They were suddenly and rudely awakened from this state of quiescence by a blinding flash of lightning, followed almost instantaneously by a tremendous clap of thunder which sounded like colliding worlds overhead, and then rolled away in deep mutterings of discontent. This was repeated at short intervals, then the rain and hail came down in torrents, and the wind rose so that soon the waves began to beat violently on the house. The day which had begun so calmly ended in furious storm—emblematic of many a day in every human life.

Seated there with feelings of awe and anxiety, the Ravenshaw household passed the night in silence.

And still the waters of the Red River continued to rise—slowly, it is true, and inch by inch instead of foot by foot—until these settlers in the great wilderness began to think, with something akin to superstitious fear, of that mighty deluge which had been sent to submerge the world in the days of old.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OLD RAVENSHAW GOES EXPLORING AND RESCUING.

ANOTHER fine calm day came to comfort the victims of the flood in the midst of that tempestuous time, with its April character of mingled



WINKELMANN IN EXTREMITIES.

storm and sunshine. The rise in the water on the previous night had been almost imperceptible. Feeling, therefore, somewhat easier in his mind, old Mr. Ravenshaw determined to embark in his boat for the purpose of paying a visit to those unfortunates who, after being driven from their homes, had taken refuge on the imperceptible eminence which had been styled "The Mountain." Taking with him Lambert and a stout crew, he embarked from his upper bedroom window, bade his wife and daughters an affectionate adieu, hoisted his sail, and pushed off.

The hoisting of the sail was a mere matter of form.

"It's of no use at present, but will be ready to catch the first puff that may favour us," observed the old gentleman, as he sat down and took the tiller. "Give way, lads."

The oars were dipped, and the Willow Creek mansion was soon but a speck on the horizon of the watery waste.

And now the old fur-trader learned the full extent of the desolation with which it had pleased God to visit the settlement at that time. While taken up with the cares and anxieties connected with Willow Creek, he was of course aware that terrible destruction, if not death, must have been going on around him; but now, when he rowed over the plains, saw the state of things with his own eyes, and heard the accounts of many settlers, some of whom he rescued from positions of danger, the full extent of the damage done by the great flood of 1826 was borne powerfully in upon his mind.

The varied stories which some had to tell of their escapes, others of their losses, and of all their sufferings, were sad as well as interesting. Some of the people had taken shelter in garrets or on stages, where they had to wait anxiously till some boat or canoe should turn up

to rescue them. Some had been surprised by the sudden rise of the flood at night while asleep, and had wakened to find themselves and their beds afloat. Two men who had gone to sleep on a rick of hay found themselves next morning drifting with the current some three miles below the spot where they had lain down. Others, like old Liz, had been carried off bodily in their huts. Not a few had been obliged to betake themselves to the housetops until help came. Some there were who took to swimming, and saved themselves by clinging to the branches of trees; yet, strange to say, during the whole course of that flood only one man lost his life.*

It was very different, however, with regard to the lower animals. When at its height the water spread out on each side of the river to a distance of six miles, and about fourteen miles of its length, so that not only were many horses, cattle, pigs, and poultry drowned in the general stampede, but the pretty little ground squirrels were driven out of their holes, and along with rats, mice, snakes, and insects, perished in thousands. Even the frogs discovered that too much of a good thing is bad, for they found no rest for the soles of their feet, except floating logs, planks, and stray pieces of furniture, on which many of them were seen by our voyagers gazing contemplatively at the situation.

Everywhere houses and barns were seen floating about, their owners gone, but with dogs and cats in the doorways and windows, and poultry on the roofs; and the barking, mewing, and cackling of these, with the squealing of sundry pigs, tended to increase the general desolation.

* Twenty-six years later, in 1852, Red River Settlement was visited by a flood very similar in its main features to that of 1826, above described; and it is a curious coincidence that only one man lost his life during the latter flood; also, that the waters of the floods of both years began to subside on exactly the same date.

Such of the contents of these houses as had been left behind in the flight were washed out of them, and the waters were sprinkled here and there with bedsteads, chairs, tables, feather-beds, and other property, besides the carcasses of dead animals.

At certain points of the river, where there were shallows towards which the currents set, carts, carioles, boxes, carriages, gigs, fencing, and property of every description, were stranded in large quantities and in dire confusion, but much of the wreck was swept onward and engulfed in Lake Winnipeg.

The unfortunate settlers found refuge ultimately, after being driven from knoll to knoll, on the higher ground of the Assinaboine, on the Little Mountain, and on a low hill twelve miles from the settlement.

On his way to the Little Mountain Mr. Ravenshaw touched at the mission station. Here the various groups in the garret of the parsonage, the gallery of the church, and on the stage, were greatly reduced in numbers, many of the refugees having availed themselves of the visits of several settlers and gone off to the mountain in their boats or canoes, with what of their property they had managed to save.

Among those who remained there was a marked spirit of cheerful submission.

"You see," said the pastor, in reply to an observation of Mr. Ravenshaw on this point, "I have endeavoured to impress upon my poor people that mere quiet submission to the inevitable is not a Christian characteristic, that men of all creeds and nations may and do thus submit, and that it is the special privilege of the follower of Jesus to submit *cheerfully* to whatever befalls—pleasant or otherwise—because he has the promise that *all* things shall work together for his good."

"Humph!" said the trader with a shrug of his shoulders; "it seems to me that some of us don't avail ourselves much of our privilege."

The pastor could scarcely repress a laugh at the grumpy tone in which his visitor spoke.

"You are right, Mr. Ravenshaw, none of us come nearly up to the mark in our Christian course. The effort to do so constitutes much of the battle that we have to fight, but our comfort is, that we shall be more than conquerors in the long-run. There sits a widow now" he continued, pointing to an Indian woman seated on the stage who was busy making a pair of moccasins for a little child that played by her side, "who is fighting her battle bravely at present. Not a murmur has yet escaped her lips, although she has lost all her possessions—except her boy."

"Ah! *except* her boy!" The old trader did not speak. He only thought of Tony and quickly changed the drift of the conversation.

Soon after leaving the mission station a breeze sprang up; the sail filled; the oars were pulled in, and they went more swiftly on. Ere long they sighted the stage on which the women had been previously discovered singing hymns. They did not sing now. Their provisions were failing, their hopes of an abatement in the flood were dying out, and they no longer refused to accept deliverance from their somewhat perilous position.

"Have you seen anything of Herr Winklemann lately?" asked Lambert of one of the women.

"Nothing; but John Flett and David Mowat passed our stage yesterday in a canoe, and they told us that the hut of old Liz Rollin has been carried away with her and her father and Winklemann's mother, and they say that her son has been seen in a small canoe rangin' about by himself like a madman searchin' for her."

"The moment we reach the Mountain I'll get hold of a canoe and go in search of him," said Lambert.

"Right, boy! right!" said Ravenshaw; "I fear that something may have happened to the poor lad. These small canoes are all very well when you can run ashore and mend 'em if they should get damaged, but out here, among sunk posts and fences, and no land to run to, it is dangerous navigation.—Hist! Did ye hear a cry, lads?"

The men ceased to talk, and listened intently, while they gazed round the watery waste in all directions.

Besides a stranded house here and there, and a few submerged trees, nothing was to be seen on the water save the carcasses of a few cattle, above which a couple of ravens were wheeling slowly.

The cry was not repeated.

"Imagination," muttered old Ravenshaw to himself, after Lambert had given a lusty shout, which, however, elicited no reply.

"It must have been; I hear nothing," said Lambert, looking round uneasily.

"Come, out oars again, lads," said the old gentleman, as the sail flapped in the failing breeze. "Night will catch us before we reach— Hallo! back your oars—hard! Catch hold of 'im."

A living creature of some sort came out from behind a floating log at that moment, and was almost run down. The man at the bow oar leaned over and caught it. The yell which followed left no shadow of doubt as to the nature of the creature. It was a pig. During the next two minutes, while it was being hauled into the boat, it made the air ring with shrieks of concentrated fury. Before dismissing this pig, we may state that it was afterwards identified by its owner, who said it had been swept away from his house two days before, and must therefore

have been swimming without relief for eight-and-forty hours.

"That accounts for the cry you heard," said Louis Lambert, when the screams subsided.

"No, Louis; a pig's voice is too familiar to deceive me. If it was not imagination, it was the voice of a man."

The old trader was right. One of the objects which, in the distance, resembled so closely the floating carcass of an ox was in reality an overturned canoe, and to the stern of that canoe Herr Winklemann was clinging. He had been long in the water, and was almost too much exhausted to see or cry. When the boat passed he thought he heard voices. Hope revived for a moment, and he uttered a feeble shout, but he failed to hear the reply. The canoe happened to float between him and the boat, so that he could not see it as it passed slowly on its course.

Poor Winklemann! In searching wildly about the wide expanse of water for his lost mother, he had run his canoe violently against the top rail of a fence. The delicate birch bark was ripped off. In another minute it sank and turned bottom up. It was a canoe of the smallest size, Winklemann having preferred to continue his search alone rather than with an unwilling companion. The German was a good swimmer; a mere upset might not have been serious. He could have righted the canoe, and perhaps clambered into it over the stern, and baled it out. But with a large hole in its bottom there was no hope of deliverance except in a passing boat or canoe. Clinging to the frail craft, the poor youth gazed long and anxiously round the horizon, endeavouring the while to push the wreck towards the nearest tree top, which, however, was a long way off.

By degrees the cold told on his huge frame, and his

great strength began to fail. Once, a canoe appeared in the distance. He shouted with all his might, but it was too far off. As it passed on out of sight he raised his eyes as if in prayer, but no sound escaped his compressed lips. It was noon when the accident occurred. Towards evening he felt as though his consciousness were going to forsake him, but the love of life was strong; he tightened his grasp on the canoe. It was just then that he heard the voices of Ravenshaw's party and shouted, but the cry, as we have said, was very feeble, and the poor fellow's sense of hearing was dulled with cold and exhaustion, else he would have heard Lambert's reply.

"Oh! mine moder! mine moder!" he sighed, as his head drooped helplessly forward, though his fingers tightened on the canoe with the convulsive grasp of a drowning man.

Night descended on the water. The moon threw a fitful gleam now and then through a rift in the sailing clouds. All was still and dark and desolate above and around the perishing man. Nothing with life was visible save a huge raven which wheeled to and fro with a solemn croak and almost noiseless wing.

But the case of Winklemann was not yet hopeless. His chum, Louis Lambert, could not shake himself free from a suspicion that the cry, which had been put down to imagination, might after all have been that of some perishing human being—perhaps that of his friend. Arrived at the Little Mountain, Louis lost no time in obtaining a canoe, also an Indian to take the bow paddle.

The mountain, which was a mere undulation of the prairie, presented a strange scene at that time. Many settlers—half-breeds, Canadians, and Indians—were encamped there; some under tents of various sizes, others under upturned boats and canoes; not a few under the

wider canopy of the heavens. Intermingled with the men, women, and children, were horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, dogs, cats, and pets of the feathered tribe, besides goods, household furniture, carts, etc., so that no words can adequately describe the scene. It was confusion worse confounded!

Many were the hospitable proposals made here to Louis Lambert that he should remain all night, for he was a general favourite, but to all these he turned a deaf ear, and set out on a searching expedition, in the canoe, just after the sun had gone down.

At first he made as straight as he could for the place where Mr. Ravenshaw had fancied he heard the cry, but on consideration came to the conclusion that, as the current must have carried all floating objects considerably farther down the settlement by that time, he ought to change his course. Soon it grew too dark to see objects distinctly, but an occasional gleam of moonshine came to his aid. He passed several floating barns and cow-houses, but found them empty. He also nearly ran against several dead animals, but the silent Indian in the bow was wary and vigilant. Hope was at last beginning to die within Louis's breast, when he observed a raven circling round some floating object.

"Ho! there 's something yonder. Strike out, old copper-nose," he exclaimed, as he directed the canoe towards it.

The light craft cut the water like a knife, and was quickly alongside.

"Why, it *is* a canoe, bottom up. Have a care. Ha! hold on!"

Lambert nearly overturned his own canoe as he made a sudden grasp at something, and caught a man by the hair.

"Hallo! I say, let go your canoe and hold on to *me*," cried Lambert, in excitement, but the man spoken to

made no reply, and would not let go the wrecked canoe.

Lambert therefore hauled him powerfully and slowly alongside until his visage was level with the gunwale. Just then a gleam of moonlight broke forth and revealed the face of Herr Winklemann! The difficulties that now beset the rescuers were great, for the poor German, besides being stupefied, had grasped his canoe with tremendous power, and could not be detached. To get an active and living man out of the water into a birch canoe is no easy matter; to embark a half-dead one is almost impossible; nevertheless Lambert and his red-skinned comrade managed to do it between them. Raising his unconscious friend as far out of the water as possible, Louis caught one of his hands and wrenched it from its hold. Meanwhile the Indian leaned out of the opposite side of the canoe so as to balance it. Another violent wrench freed the other hand. It also freed Winklemann's spirit to some extent, and called it back to life, for he exclaimed, "Vat is dat?" in a tone of faint but decided surprise.

"Here, lay hold of my neck," said Lambert, in a peremptory voice.

Winklemann obeyed. Lambert exerted all his strength and heaved. The Indian did not dare to lend a hand, as that would have upset the canoe, but he leaned still farther over its other side as a counterpoise. At last Lambert got his friend on the edge,. and tumbled him inboard. At the same moment the Indian adroitly resumed his position, and Winklemann was saved!

"You'll soon be all right," said Lambert, resuming his paddle. "Haven't swallowed much water, I hope?"

"No, no," said Winklemann faintly; "mine lunks, I do tink, are free of vatter, but mine lecks are stranchly

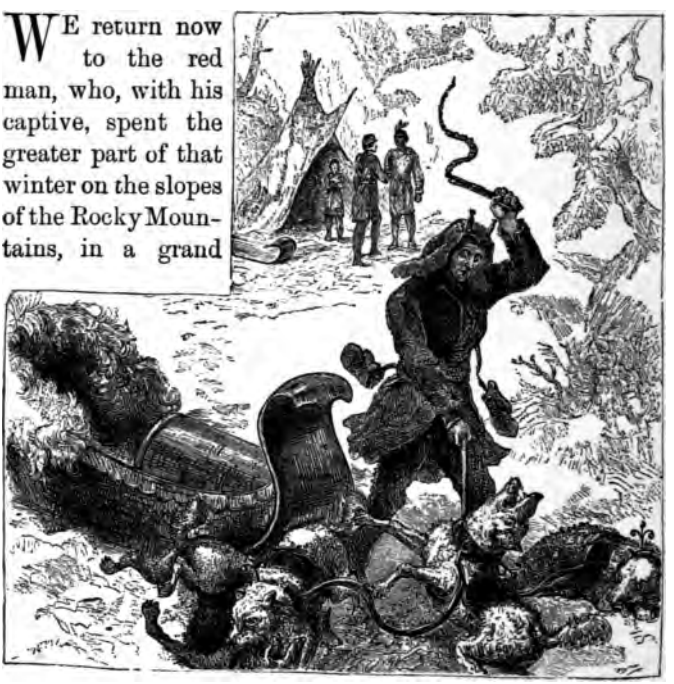
qveer. I hav no lecks at all! 'Pears as if I vas stop short at zee vaist!"

Herr Winklemann said no more, but was swiftly borne, in a state of semi-consciousness, to his friends on the Little Mountain.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RED MAN RECEIVES A VISITOR, COGITATES DEEPLY, AND ACTS WITH DECISION.

WE return now to the red man, who, with his captive, spent the greater part of that winter on the slopes of the Rocky Mountains, in a grand



THE RED MAN'S TENT.

valley between two spurs of the range which merged gradually into the prairie.

In this sequestered spot Petawanaquat could, by turning to the right hand, seek the rugged haunts of the grizzly bear and the Rocky Mountain goat; or, by turning to the left, ride after the buffalo on his own undulating plains. Here the Indian instructed Tony in all the mysteries of the hunter's craft, showed him how to set traps for wolves and foxes, and snares for rabbits, and taught him how to use the gun, and how to follow the tracks of game in the snow. He also made him a little bow, with a sheaf of blunt-headed arrows, and a pair of snow-shoe frames, the interstices of which were filled up by the red man's wife.

Petawanaquat had only one wife, named Meekeye. He might have had half a dozen wives if he had chosen, because he was a strong, able, and successful hunter, which is equivalent to saying he was, for an Indian, a rich man, and among the Indians there is no legal limit, we believe, to the number of a man's wives. But *our* red man seemed to think one quite enough. He was very good to her—which is more than can be said, alas! of many white men. He never failed to bring her the tit-bits of all animals slain in the chase. He never beat her if she grew weary on the march, as too many of his savage countrymen are wont to do, but, on the contrary, relieved her of part of her burden, and, as a rule, carried the heaviest part of the family baggage on his own shoulders or sledge. Moreover, when on a visit with his furs to the stores of the fur-traders, he never failed to consult Meekeye as to every purchase that he made, and invariably gladdened her heart with gifts of scarlet cloth and white enamelled beads, and brilliant ribbons and little circular mirrors, which were deemed ample in size, though hardly big enough to display to advantage the point of an average

nose. In short, Petawanaquat was quite un-Indian and chivalrous in his attentions to his squaw, who repaid him with faithful service, and, above all, with loving looks from the orbs which had originated her name.

Some people may think the loving looks produced the chivalry; others that the chivalry caused the looks. Whichever way it was, the result was—mutual felicity. The red man had no family, hence Meekeye took to Tony with something of the fervour of a mother. Tony soon reciprocated. At first he indulged some of his mischievous tendencies, but, being only smiled at when he was naughty, found that the interest of being bad was gone, and ere long gave it up.

In the presence of his new father he never dared to be other than absolute perfection. Petawanaquat's solemnity was too much for him. Thus it came to pass that Tony was soon thoroughly broken in. Meekeye taught him to make leggings and to ornament moccasins, for the boy was omnivorous in his thirst for knowledge. He swallowed everything with avidity, including immense quantities of food, so that his frame and mind developed together in a marvellous manner.

Of course the red man did not take Tony with him on his longest hunting expeditions, but he took him considerable distances from home notwithstanding, and showed him the "far west" sport in all its phases, insomuch that Tony, who could scarcely sit a trotting horse in the settlements, became Tonyquat the Fearless in the course of time—could ride bare-backed steeds with ease, and could send his little arrows into the flank of a buffalo with as much coolness, if not as much force, as his instructor.

Tony even got the length of drawing first blood from a grizzly bear. It happened thus:—

He was out with Petawanaquat one day, in a narrow defile of the mountains. The Indian carried his gun; the boy his bow. Tony's quiver contained two sorts of arrows, one set shod with iron, and sharp, the other set not only blunt, but with a lumpy wooden head, meant not to pierce but to stun birds.

"Ho, look here!" exclaimed Tony, fitting a blunt arrow to the string, and pointing up at a tree, among the branches of which sat a bird resembling a grey hen in size and colour.

Petawanaquat stopped, let the butt of his gun fall to the ground, rested his hands on the muzzle, and smiled approval.

The arrow flew, hit the bird on its astonished eye, and brought it down.

"Good! Tonyquat will be a great chief," said the red man, with another grave nod.

"Ho, look *there!*" whispered Tony, glaring in the direction of a thicket while he fitted a sharp arrow to his bow.

Turning quickly, the Indian saw a grizzly bear rise from behind a rock and look at the hunters inquiringly. Before he could raise his gun he heard a twang, and next moment saw an arrow quivering in the bear's neck. The roar of the enraged animal and the report of his own gun commingled. Another instant, and Tony found himself in the midst of the tree out of which he had just brought the grey bird, hurled there by Petawanaquat, who was himself not a moment too soon in climbing to the same place of refuge. From this point of vantage the Indian, having carried his gun up with him, fired several deadly shots, and killed the bear, whose claws Tony afterwards wore in commemoration of the event.

This was but one of the varied and stirring adventures

which befell our little hero while under the care of his red-skinned captor.

What passed in the mind of the Indian during that winter Tony had little opportunity of knowing, for he was remarkably taciturn, though at night, when smoking the calumet over his wigwam fire, the thoughtful expression of his face, and occasional troubled look on his brows, suggested the idea that he was ill at ease. He frequently gazed at his captive as if about to speak to him seriously, but as often seemed to abandon the idea with something like a sigh.

One evening, however, Petawanaquat seemed more troubled than usual, and held frequent earnest consultations with Meekeye in an undertone, in the midst of which Tony could distinguish a few words, such as "tracks," "white strangers," "encampment," etc. Before going to rest the Indian smoked an extra pipe, and then said—

"Tonyquat is a brave boy!"

"Yes," answered Tony, with an air of gravity quite equal to that of his red father. The few months he had been in captivity had indeed wrought an almost miraculous change in the child. His ideas were much more manly. Even his speech had lost its childish lisp, and he had begun to express himself somewhat in the allegorical language of the American Indian. Under the influence of a will stronger than his own he had proved himself an apt scholar.

"Tonyquat is a boy who keeps his word?" continued the other, with a keen glance.

Tony turned his large eyes full on the Indian.

"Has my Indian father ever found Tonyquat telling lies?"

To this Petawanaquat said "Good," and smoked his pipe with increasing vigour, while Tony sat with his

hands clasped over one knee, gazing sternly at the fire, as though he were engaged in consulting on matters of life and death. He glanced, however, for one instant at Meekeye, to see that she observed his staid demeanour. The same glance revealed to Tony the fact that Meekeye's right foot was rather near the fire, with the red-hot end of a log close to it. Tony's own left foot chanced to rest on the other and unburnt end of the same log. A very gentle motion on his part sufficed to bring Meekeye's toes and the fire into contact. She drew back with a sudden start, but was too much of an Indian to scream. Tony was enough of one to remain motionless and abstracted like a brown statue. The slightest possible twitch at one corner of Petawanaquat's mouth showed that he had observed the movement, but his brow did not relax as he said—

"Tonyquat must make his red father a promise. White men are coming here. They travel towards the setting sun. If they hear the voice of Tonyquat they will take him away."

"Will they take me to my own father?" cried Tony, forgetting his rôle in the excitement of the moment.

"Petawanaquat has said that the white strangers travel towards the setting sun. Red River lies in the direction of the rising sun. Would Tonyquat like to go with white strangers into the mountains?"

Tony was most emphatic in his denial of entertaining any such desire, and declared with his wonted candour that he loved Petawanaquat and Meekeye next to his own father and mother.

"If this be so," returned the Indian, "Tonyquat must be dumb when the white men speak to him. He must know nothing. His voice must be more silent than the waters of a lake when the wind is dead."

Tony promised to be as dumb as a stone, as ignorant as a new-born infant, and as quiet as a dead man. He then questioned the Indian about the white men, but obtained no further information than that Petawanaquat had come on their camp unexpectedly the day before, had observed them secretly from among the bushes, knew that the route they were pursuing would infallibly lead them to his wigwam, and that therefore he had hurried home to be ready for them. He could not tell who the white men were. They looked like traders—that was all he knew, or, at least, chose to communicate.

That night Meekeye repainted Tony's neck and face with considerable care; dyed his luxuriant hair with grease and charcoal; touched up his eyebrows with the same, and caused him to dirty his hands effectively with mud and ashes.

Next morning, a little after sunrise, the twinkle of bells, the yelping of dogs, and the cracking of whips were heard. Petawanaquat and Tony had just time to step out of the tent when a cariole, somewhat in the form of a slipper-bath, drawn by four dogs, dashed up to the door. The dogs, being fresh and young, took to fighting. Their driver, who wore a head-dress with horns, belaboured the combatants and abused them in French, while a tall, quiet-looking man arose from the furs of the cariole, and, mounting the slope on which the Indian stood to receive him, advanced towards the wigwam. Some minutes later another team of dogs with a provision-sled and driver came rattling up.

"What cheer?" said the tall man heartily, as he held out his hand.

"Wat chee?" replied Petawanaquat, grasping the hand, and repeating the phrase as he had learnt it in the settlements.

The tall man was very affable, and at once revealed the object of his journey. He was a missionary, he said, and was making a tour among the native tribes of that region to preach the good news of salvation from sin and its consequences through Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Petawanaquat listened with grave intelligence, but with the reticence of an Indian.

"Some tribes of Indians, I have been told, are encamped not far from this spot," said the missionary through his interpreter.

Petawanaquat admitted that such was the case, and that some lodges of Indians were pitched in the mountains not two days' march from his tent.

The missionary entered the wigwam and sat down. He gradually introduced the subject of his mission, and endeavoured to bring it home to the Indian and his wife, who, however, replied in very brief sentences. He also addressed Tony, but that sharp child seemed to be less impressionable than a pine stump, and refused to utter a word on any subject. The missionary, however, was a true man, with the love of God burning brightly in his breast. Although slightly disappointed he was not discouraged. He spoke of Christ crucified with great earnestness, and commended the Christian virtues—among others the duty of forgiving, nay, even loving, one's enemies, and especially of returning good for evil. He also dwelt much on the wickedness of harbouring revengeful feelings, and on the sweetness and blessedness of doing good to others—enforcing his arguments on the latter point by quoting the Saviour's own words, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Still the red man listened with stolid composure, Meekeye with apparent indifference, and Tony with

absolute vacancy, so that the missionary, after offering up a silent prayer, went on his way with a sad feeling at his heart that his labour with that family of savages had been in vain. He comforted himself, however, with the reflection that it is written, "Your labour is *not* in vain in the Lord."

And he was right. His labour had not been in vain, though it was not given to him at that time to see the fruit thereof.

We have said that Petawanaquat had smoked and pondered deeply in the evenings that winter over his wigwam fire. His slightly enlightened mind had been busy with those difficult problems about good and evil, God and man, which seem to exercise all earnest souls more or less in every land, savage as well as civilised. The revenge which he had taken on Mr. Ravenshaw was sweet—very sweet, for his indignation against that irascible old gentleman was very bitter; justifiably so, he thought. But the clergyman at Red River had enlightened the red man's conscience, and conscience being once aroused cannot easily be put to sleep again. His reasoning powers told him that the revenge which he had taken was far in excess of the injury which he had received. This was unjust, and conscience told him that injustice was wrong. The great Manitou Himself could not be unjust. Had He not taken the guilt of man on Himself in the person of Jesus, in order that, without injustice, He might be the justifier of sinners? Injustice is wrong, reiterated conscience again and again; but revenge is sweet, thought the Indian.

Now this visit of the missionary had cleared the mind of Petawanaquat to some extent. It was a new idea to him that returning good for evil was sweeter than revenge. He coupled this thought with the fact that the Saviour

had laid down His life for His *enemies*, and the result was that a change, gradual but decided, was wrought in the red man's sentiments. The seed thus sown by the wayside fell into good ground. Unlike ordinary seed, it bore fruit during the winter, and that fruit ripened into action in the spring.

"Tonyquat," said the red man one morning, after much of the snow had left the ground, "your Indian father intends to start on a long journey to-morrow."

"Petawanaquat," replied Tony, "your white-faced son is ready to follow."

It must be understood that Tony's language was figurative, for at the time he was speaking his "white" face was changed so much by paint and smoke that it quite equalled that of his adopted father in dirty brownness.

"Meekeye will get ready," continued the Indian. "Our journey shall be towards the rising sun."

The result of this order was that on the following day the Indian's leather tent was taken down, wrapped up into a bundle, and fastened to a couple of poles along with the rest of the family property. One end of each of these poles was fastened to a horse like shafts; the other ends were left to trail on the ground, the load resting between these ends and the steed's tail. It was, as it were, a cart without wheels or body. Meekeye mounted the horse after the fashion of a man. Petawanaquat and Tony together mounted another steed. Three dogs formed part of the establishment. These were harnessed to little poles like those of the horse, and each dragged a little load proportioned to his size. Thus they left the spur of the Rocky Mountains and travelled over the plains towards Red River settlement.

About the same time, and with the same destination in

view, and not far distant from the same region, another party on horseback commenced their journey towards the rising sun.

The two parties ultimately met—but these and other matters we shall reserve for our next chapter.

CHAPTER XX.

A TERRIBLE DISASTER AND A JOYFUL MEETING.

WE left Ian Macdonald, it will be remembered, far away in the western wilderness, suffering from the wounds received during his



THEY WERE HURLED OVER THE RAPIDS.

memorable and successful combat with a grizzly bear. These wounds were much more serious than had at first been supposed, and, despite the careful nursing of Vic Ravenshaw and Michel Rollin, he grew so weak from loss of blood that it became evident to all of them that they should have to take up their abode in that wild unpeopled spot for a considerable period of time. They therefore planned and built a small log-hut in a wood well stocked with game, and on the margin of a little stream where fish abounded.

At first Victor resolved to ride to the nearest fort of the fur-traders and fetch a doctor, or the means of conveying their wounded friend to a place where better attendance and shelter were to be had, but insurmountable difficulties lay in the way. There were no doctors in the land! The nearest abode of civilised man was several hundred miles distant, and neither he nor Rollin knew the way to any place whatever. They had depended entirely on Ian as a guide, and now that he was helpless, so were they! It would have been difficult for them even to have found their way back to the Red River Settlement without the aid of the scholastic backwoodsman. They were constrained, therefore, to rest where they were, hoping from day to day that Ian would regain strength sufficient to bear the fatigue of a journey. Thus the winter slowly slipped away, and wild-fowl—the harbingers of spring—were beginning to awake the echoes of the northern woods before Ian felt himself strong enough to commence the journey homewards.

That winter, with all its vicissitudes, hopes, fears, adventures, and pleasures, we must pass over in absolute silence, and reintroduce our three friends on the evening of a fine spring day, while riding over a sweep of prairie land in the direction of a thick belt of forest.

"The river must be somewhere hereabouts," said Ian, reining up on an eminence, and gazing earnestly round him.

"Vas you ever here before?" asked Rollin.

"Ay, once, but not at this precise spot. I don't quite recognise it. I hope my long illness has not damaged my memory."

"If we don't reach the river soon," said Victor, with something of weariness in his tone, "this poor brute will give in."

Victor referred to his horse, which had been reduced by some unknown disease to skin and bone.

"However, I'm well able to walk," he continued, more cheerfully; "and it can't be long before we shall fall in with the river, and some Indians, who will sell or lend us a canoe."

"Ah! my cheval is not much more better dan your von," said Rollin; and he spoke the truth, for his horse was afflicted with the same disease that had attacked that of Victor. Ian's steed, however, was in excellent condition.

That night the invalid horses were freed from all their troubles by a pack of wolves while their owners were asleep. They had been "hobbled" so carelessly that they had broken loose and strayed far from the encampment. Being weak they fell an easy prey to their sneaking enemies.

Next day, however, the three friends reached the river of which they were in search, found a family of Indians there who bartered with them a canoe and some provisions for the remaining horse, and continued their homeward journey by water.

For a time all went well. The river was in high flood, for the snow-fall there, as elsewhere, had been unusually heavy, but all three were expert voyageurs, and succeeded

in steering past difficulties of all kinds, until one afternoon, when good fortune seemed to forsake them utterly. They began by running the canoe against a sunk tree, or snag, and were obliged to put ashore to avoid sinking. The damage was, however, easily remedied; and while Ian was busy with the repairs his comrades prepared a hot dinner, which meal they usually ate cold in the canoe. Next they broke a paddle. This was also easily replaced. After that they ventured to run a rapid which almost proved too much for them; it nearly overturned the canoe, and filled it so full of water that they were compelled to land again, unload, and empty it.

"Dat is too bad," observed Rollin, with a growl of discontent.

"It might have been worse," said Ian.

"Bah!" returned Rollin.

"Pooh!" ejaculated Victor.

"Very good," said Ian; "I only hope the truth of my remark mayn't be proved to both of you."

It has been asserted by the enemies of Ian Macdonald that the catastrophe which followed was the result of a desire on his part to prove the truth of his own remark, but we acquit him of such baseness. Certain it is, however, that the very next rapid they came to they ran straight down upon a big stone over which the water was curling in grand fury.

"Hallo!" shouted Ian, in sudden alarm, dipping his paddle powerfully on the right.

"Hi!" yelled Rollin, losing his head and dipping wildly on the same side—which was wrong.

"Look out!" roared Victor.

He might as well have roared "Look in," for any good that could have come of it. There was a crash; the canoe burst up and doubled down, the bow was hurled high in

the air, the rest of it lay out limp, and disappeared. Rollin went clean over the rock, Victor went round it, and Ian, after grasping it for a second, went under it apparently, for, like the canoe, he disappeared. That rapid treated these voyagers roughly. Of the three, Michel Rollin appeared to suffer most. After sending him round the stone in a rush of foam that caused his arms and legs to go round like a mad windmill, it sucked him down, rubbed his head on the boulders at the bottom, shot him up feet foremost into the air, received him on its raging breast again, spun him round like a teetotum, and, at last, hurled him almost contemptuously upon a sandbank at its foot.

Ian and Victor also received a severe buffeting before gaining the same sandbank, where they faced each other in a blaze of surprise and horror!

Unable to find words to express their feelings, they turned simultaneously, and waded in silence from the sandbank to the shore.

Here a consultation of the most doleful character that can be imagined was entered into.

"Everything lost," said Ian, sitting down on a bank, and wringing the water out of his garments.

"Not even a gun saved," said Victor gravely.

"No, nor von mout'ful of pemmican," cried Rollin, wildly grasping his hair and glaring.

The poor fellow seemed to his friends to have gone suddenly mad, for the glare of despair turned to a grin of wild amusement, accompanied by a strange laugh, as he pointed straight before him, and became, as it were, transfixed.

Turning to look in the direction indicated, they beheld a small Indian boy, absolutely naked, remarkably brown, and gazing at them with a look of wonder that was never equalled by the most astonished owl known to natural history.

Seeing that he was observed, the boy turned and fled like an antelope. Rollin uttered a yell, and bounded away in pursuit. The half-breed could easily have caught him, but he did not wish to do so. He merely uttered an appalling shriek now and then to cause the urchin to increase his speed. The result was that the boy led his pursuer straight to the wigwam of his father, which was just what Rollin wanted. It stood but a short distance from the scene of the wreck.

And now, when, to all appearance, they had reached the lowest turn in the wheel of fortune, they were raised to the highest heights of joy, for the Indian proved to be friendly, supplied them with provisions to continue their journey, and gave them a good bow and quiver of arrows on their simple promise to reward him if he should visit them at Red River in the course of the summer. He had not a canoe to lend them, however. They were therefore constrained to complete their journey over the prairies on foot.

"You see, I said that things might be worse," said Ian, as they lay on their backs beside each other that night after supper, each rolled in his blanket and gazing complacently at the stars.

"Yes, but you did not say that they might also be better. Why did not your prophetic soul enable you to see further and tell of our present state of comparative good fortune, Mr. Wiseman?" asked Victor with a sigh of contentment.

"I did not prophesy, Vic; I only talked of what *might* be."

"Vat is dat you say? vat *might* be?" exclaimed Rollin. "Ah! vat *is* is vorse. Here am me, go to bed vidout my smok. Dat is most shockable state I has yet arrive to."

"Poor fellows!" said Ian, in a tone of commiseration.

"You indeed lose everything when you lose that on which your happiness depends."

"Bah!" ejaculated Rollin, as he turned his back on his comrades and went to sleep.

A feeling of sadness as well as drowsiness came over Victor as he lay there blinking at the stars. The loss of their canoe and all its contents was but a small matter compared with the failure of their enterprise, for was he not now returning home, while Tony still remained a captive with the red man? Ian's thoughts were also tinged with sadness and disappointment on the same account. Nevertheless, he experienced a slight gleam of comfort as the spirit of slumber stole over him, for had he not, after all, succeeded in killing a grizzly bear, and was not the magnificent claw collar round his neck at that very moment, with one of the claw-points rendering him, so to speak, pleasantly uncomfortable? and would he not soon see Elsie? and—

Thought stopped short at this point, and remained there —or left him—we know not which.

Again we venture to skip. Passing over much of that long and toilsome journey on foot, we resume the thread of our tale at the point when our three travellers, emerging suddenly from a clump of wood one day, came unexpectedly to the margin of an unknown sea!

"Lak Vinnipeg have busted hisself, an' cover all de vorld," exclaimed Rollin, with a look of real alarm at his companions.

"The Red River has overflowed, and the land is flooded," said Ian, in a low solemn voice.

"Surely, surely," said Victor, in sudden anxiety, "there must have been many houses destroyed, since the water has come so far, but—but, father's house stands high."

Ian's face wore a troubled look as he replied—

"Ay, boy, but the water has come more than twelve miles over the plains, for I know this spot well. It must be deep—very deep—at the Willow Creek."

"Vat shall ve do vidout bot or canoe?"

Rollin's question was not heeded, for at that moment two canoes were seen in the distance coming from the direction of Lake Winnipeg. One was paddled by an Indian, the other by a squaw and a boy. They made straight for the spot where our travellers were standing. As they drew near, Victor hailed them. The boy in the bow of the foremost canoe was observed to cease paddling. As he drew nearer, his eyes were seen to blaze, and eager astonishment was depicted on his painted face. When the canoe touched land he leaped out, and, with a yell that would have done credit to the wildest redskin in the prairie, rushed at Victor, leaped into his arms, and, shouting "Vic! Vic!" besmeared his face with charcoal, ochre, vermilion, and kisses!

To say that Victor was taken by surprise would be feeble language. Of course he prepared for self-defence, at the first furious rush, but the shout of "Vic!" opened his eyes; he not only submitted to be kissed, but returned the embrace with tenfold interest, and mixed up the charcoal, ochre, and vermilion with his mouth and nose and Tony's tears of joy.

Oh it was an amazing sight, the meeting of these brothers. It is hard to say whether the eyes or the mouths of the onlookers opened widest. Petawanaquat was the only one who retained his composure. The eyes of Meekeye were moistened despite her native stoicism, but her husband stood erect with a grave sad countenance, and his blanket folded, with his arms in classic fashion, on his breast. As for Rollin, he became and remained for some time a petrifaction of amazement.

When the first burst was over, Victor turned to Petawanaquat, and as he looked at his stern visage a dark frown settled on his own, and he felt a clenching of his fists, as he addressed the Indian in his native tongue.

"What made you take him away?" he demanded indignantly.

"Revenge," answered the red man, with dignified calmness.

"And what induces you now to bring him back?" asked Victor, in some surprise.

"Forgiveness," answered Petawanaquat.

For a few moments Victor gazed at the calm countenance of the Indian in silent surprise.

"What do you mean?" he asked, with a puzzled look.

"Listen," replied the Indian slowly. "Petawanaquat loves revenge. He has tasted revenge. It is sweet, but the Indian has discovered a new fountain. The old white father thirsts for his child. Does not the white man's Book say, If your enemy thirst, give him drink? The red man brings Tonyquat back in order that he may heap coals of fire on the old white father's head. The Great Spirit has taught Petawanaquat that forgiveness is sweeter than revenge."

He stopped abruptly. Victor still looked at him with a puzzled expression.

"Well," he said, smiling slightly, "I have no doubt that my father will forgive you, now that you have brought back the child."

A gleam, which seemed to have a touch of scorn in it, shot from the Indian's eye as he rejoined—

"When Petawanaquat brings back Tonyquat, it is a proof that *he* forgives the old white father."

This was all that the Indian would condescend to say. The motives which had decided him to return good for

evil were too hazy and complex for him clearly to understand, much less explain. He took refuge, therefore, in dignified silence.

Victor was too happy in the recovery of his brother to push the investigation further, or to cherish feelings of ill-will. He therefore went up to the Indian, and, with a smile of candour on his face, held out his hand, which the latter grasped and shook, exclaiming "Wat-chee!" under the belief that these words formed an essential part of every white man's salutation.

This matter had barely been settled when a man came out of the woods and approached them. He was one of the Red River settlers, but personally unknown to any of them. From him they heard of the condition of the settlement. Of course they asked many eager questions about their own kindred after he had mentioned the chief points of the disastrous flood.

"And what of my father, Samuel Ravenshaw?" asked Victor anxiously.

"What! the old man at Willow Creek, whose daughter is married to Lambert?"

"Married to Lambert!" exclaimed Ian, turning deadly pale.

"Ay, or engaged to be, I'm not sure which," replied the man. "Oh, he's all right. The Willow Creek house stands too high to be washed away. The family still lives in it—in the upper rooms."

"And Angus Macdonald, what of him?" asked Ian.

"An' ma mere—my moder, ole Liz Rollin, an' ole Daddy, has you hear of dem?" demanded Rollin.

At the mention of old Liz the man's face became grave.

"Angus Macdonald and his sister," he said, "are well, and with the Ravenshaws, I believe, or at the Little Mountain, their house being considered in danger; but

old Liz Rollin," he added, turning to the anxious half-breed, "has been carried away with her hut, nobody knows where. They say that her old father and the mother of Winklemann have gone along with her."

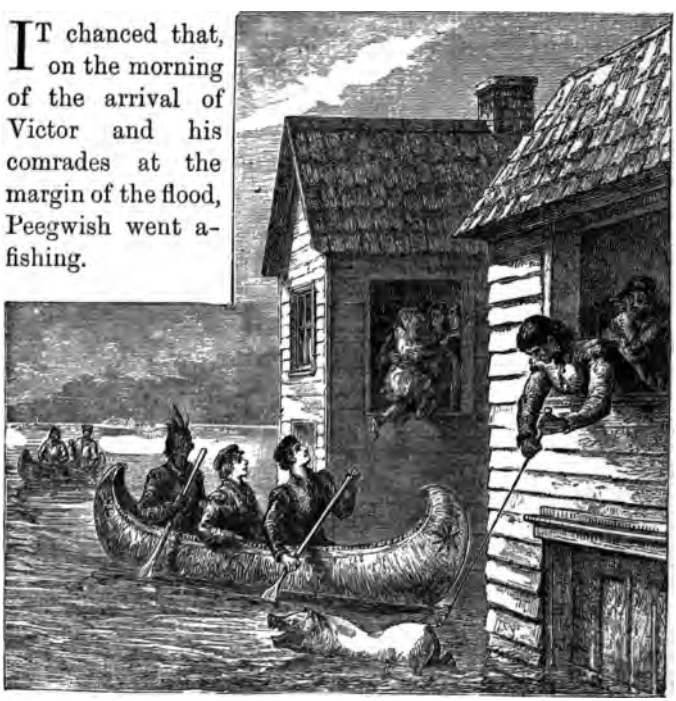
Words cannot describe the state of mind into which this information threw poor Michel Rollin. He insisted on seizing one of the canoes and setting off at once. As his companions were equally anxious to reach their flooded homes an arrangement was soon come to. Petawanaquat put Tony into the middle of his canoe with Victor, while Ian took the bow paddle. Michel took the steering paddle of the other canoe, and Meekeye seated herself in the bow.

Thus they launched out upon the waters of the flood, and, bidding adieu to the settler who had given them such startling information, were soon paddling might and main in the direction of the settlement.

CHAPTER XXI.

RETURN OF THE LOST ONE.

IT chanced that, on the morning of the arrival of Victor and his comrades at the margin of the flood, Peegwish went a-fishing.



TONY'S WELCOME HOME.

That astute Indian was fond of fishing. It suited his tastes and habits; it was an art which was admirably adapted to his tendencies. Peegwish was, naturally as well as by training, lazy, and what could be more congenial to a lazy man than a "gentle art" which involved nothing more than sitting on a river bank smoking a pipe and awaiting a bite? It had a spice of intellectuality about it too, for did it not foster a spirit of meditation, contemplation, and even of philosophical speculation —when he chanced to be awake? Moreover, it saved him from harder labour, and shut the mouths of those ill-natured people who objected to drones, and had a tendency to reproach them, for was he not assiduously procuring for men and women a portion of that nourishment without which labour would be impossible?

The peculiar action of the flood had favoured Peegwish in regard to his beloved art, for, whereas in former days he was obliged to get up from his lair and go down to the river bank to fish, now he had nothing more to do than open the window and cast out his line, and Wildcat was close at hand to fetch him a light when his pipe chanced to go out, which it frequently did, for the red old savage slept much. When, therefore, we say that Peegwish went a-fishing, it must be understood that he merely left his seat by the stove in the upper room at Willow Creek and opened the window.

Wildcat was as fond of fishing as her brother, but there were a few difficulties in her way which did not exist in his. Water had to be drawn, wood to be chopped, moccasins and leggings and coats to be made, as well as meals to be cooked. She was, therefore, compelled to fish in moderation.

"Bring a light," said Peegwish, in that tone of mild entreaty with which he was wont to make his wants known.

There being no one else in the room at the moment, Wildcat obeyed.

Peegwish looked into the room for a moment, and extended his left hand for the piece of lighted stick; with his right hand he held his line. Suddenly that hand received an amazing tug. Peegwish unintentionally scattered the firebrand, dropped his pipe from his lips, and uttered a shout, while with both hands he held on to the jerking line.

One of Mr. Ravenshaw's largest pigs had been swept out of the outhouse lofts. Struggling with the stream, he passed under the window of the storeroom, and came across the line of Peegwish with his tail. Every one must be familiar with the tendency of tails in general to shut down when touched. The unfortunate pig obeyed the natural law, and the line continued to slip until the hook was reached, when, of course, the natural result followed. There could be no hope of escape, for the tail was remarkably tough and the line strong. Peegwish held on stoutly. Wildcat lent her aid. The jerking on the tail depressed the snout of the pig, whose shrieks, being thus varied by intermittent gurgles, rendered the noise more appalling, and quickly drew the whole household to the windows.

Unfortunately there were none there but women—Mr. Ravenshaw and the other men being still absent with the boat. The canoe had also been sent off that morning for a load of firewood, so that the only way of relieving the pig was to haul him in at the window. But he was too heavy to be thus treated, and as Peegwish did not wish to break his line and lose his hook he could only hold on in despair, while Elsie and Cora, with their mother and Wildcat, stood by helpless and horrified, yet amused, by the novelty of the situation and the frightful noise.

While this scene was being enacted at Willow Creek, Victor, with the recovered Tony and the rest of them, were drawing quickly near.

Deeply though the hearts of most of these wanderers were filled with anxious fears, they could not help being impressed with the scenes of desolation—deserted and submerged homesteads, wreck and ruin—through which they passed. At one moment the two canoes were skimming over the waters of a boundless lake; at another they were winding out and in among the trees of a submerged bit of woodland. Presently they found themselves among house tops, and had to proceed cautiously for fear of sunken fences, and then out they swept again over the wide sheet of water, where the once familiar prairie lay many feet below.

The maple-trees were by that time in full leaf, and the rich green verdure of bush and tree was bursting out on all sides, when not submerged. Swallows skimmed about in hundreds, dipping the tips of their blue wings in the flood, as though to test its reality, while flocks of little yellow birds—like canaries, but rather larger, with more black on their wings—flitted from bush to tree or from isle to isle. The month of May in those regions is styled the "flower month," and June the "heart-berry month," but flowers and heart-berries were alike drowned out that year in Red River of the North, and none of the wonted perfumes of the season regaled the noses of our voyagers as they returned home.

"There they are at last!" exclaimed Victor, with sparkling eyes, "the elms on the knoll. D' ye see them, Tony? I do believe I see the smoking-box. But for the bushes we might see the chimneys of Willow Creek."

Tony's excitement was great, but the effect of his late training was seen in the suppression of all feeling, save

that which escaped through the eyes. Paint and charcoal concealed the flush on his cheeks effectually.

"Tonyquat sees," he replied.

Victor received this with a loud laugh, but Tony, although annoyed, did not lose his dignity, which the red man in the stern of the canoe observed with a look of pride and satisfaction.

Michel Rollin, in the other canoe, close alongside, was observed to hold up his hand.

"Hush!" he said, turning his head as if to listen. "I do hear someting—someting not meloderous."

"Is it melliferous, then?" asked Vic, with a smile.

But Rollin made no reply. He was far from jesting, poor fellow, at that moment. The thought of his old mother and grandfather, and fears as to their fate, weighed heavily on his heart, and took all the fun out of him.

"It sounds like pigs," said Ian.

"Oui. Dey be killin' porkers," said Rollin, with a nod, as he dipped his paddle again and pushed on.

As they drew near, the excitement of the voyagers increased, so did their surprise at the prolonged and furious shrieking. Gradually the vigour of their strokes was strengthened, until they advanced at racing speed. Finally, they swept round the corner of the old house at Willow Creek, and burst upon the gaze of its inhabitants, while Peegwish and the pig were at the height of their struggles.

Mrs. Ravenshaw chanced to be the first to observe them.

"Ian Macdonald!" she shouted, for his form in the bow of the leading canoe was the most conspicuous.

"Victor!" cried the sisters, with a scream that quite eclipsed the pig.

They rushed to another window, under which the canoes were pulled up.

"Oh! Victor, Victor," cried Mrs. Ravenshaw, with a deadly faintness at her heart; "you haven't found—"

"Mother!" cried Tony, casting off his Indian reserve, and starting up with a hysterical shout, "Mother!"

"Tony!" exclaimed everybody in the same breath, for they all knew his voice, though they did not believe their eyes.

It was only four feet or so from the canoe to the window. Mrs. Ravenshaw leaned over and seized Tony's uplifted hands. Elsie and Cora lent assistance. A light vault, and Tony went in at the window, from which immediately issued half-stifled cries of joy. At that moment Peegwish uttered a terrible roar, as he fell back into the room with the broken line in his hand, accidentally driving Wildcat into a corner. A last supreme effort had been made by the pig. He had broken the hook, and went off with a final shriek of triumph.

Thus, amid an appropriate whirlwind of confusion, noise, and disaster, was the long-lost Tony restored to his mother's arms!

Seated calmly in the stern of his canoe, Petawanaquat observed the scene with a look of profound gravity. His revenge was complete! He had returned to his enemy the boy of whom he had become so fond that he felt as though Tony really were his own son. He had bowed his head to the dictates of an enlightened conscience. He had returned good for evil. A certain feeling of deep happiness pervaded the red man's heart, but it was accompanied, nevertheless, by a vague sense of bereavement and sadness which he could not shake off just then.

Quite as calmly and as gravely sat Ian Macdonald. His eyes once more beheld Elsie, the angel of his dreams, but he had no right to look upon her now with the old feelings. Her troth was plighted to Lambert. It might be that they were already married! though he could not

bring himself to believe that; besides, he argued, hoping against hope, if such were the case, Elsie would not be living with her father's family. No, she was not yet married, he felt sure of that; but what mattered it? A girl whose heart was true as steel could never be won from the man to whom she had freely given herself. No, there was no hope; and poor Ian sat there in silent despair, with no sign, however, of the bitter thoughts within on his grave, thoughtful countenance.

Not less gravely sat Michel Rollin in the stern of his canoe. No sense of the ludicrous was left in his anxious brain. He had but one idea, and that was—old Liz! With some impatience he waited until the ladies inside the house were able to answer his queries about his mother. No sooner did he obtain all the information they possessed than he transferred Meekeye to her husband's canoe, and set off alone in the other to search for the lost hut—as Winklemann had done before him.

Meanwhile the remainder of the party were soon assembled in the family room on the upper floor, doing justice to an excellent meal, of which most of them stood much in need.

"Let me wash that horrid stuff off your face, darling, before you sit down," said Miss Trim to Tony.

The boy was about to comply, but respect for the feelings of his Indian father caused him to hesitate. Perhaps the memory of ancient rebellion was roused by the old familiar voice, as he replied—

"Tonyquat loves his war-paint. It does not spoil his appetite."

It was clear from a twinkle in Tony's eye, and a slight motion in his otherwise grave face, that, although this style of language now came quite naturally to him, he was keeping it up to a large extent on purpose.

"Tonyquat!" exclaimed Mrs. Ravenshaw, aghast with surprise, "what does the child mean?"

"I'll say Tony, mother, if you like it better," he said, taking his mother's hand.

"He's become a redskin," said Victor, half-amused, half-anxious.

"Tony," said Miss Trim, whose heart yearned towards her old but almost unrecognisable pupil, "don't you remember how we used to do lessons together and play sometimes?"

"And fight?" added Cora, with a glance at Ian, which caused Elsie to laugh.

"Tonyquat does not forget," replied the boy, with profound gravity. "He remembers the lessons and the punishments. He also remembers dancing on the teacher's bonnet and scratching the teacher's nose!"

This was received with a shout of delighted laughter, for in it the spirit of the ancient Tony was recognised.

But Ian Macdonald did not laugh. He scarcely spoke except when spoken to. He seemed to have no appetite, and his face was so pale from his long illness that he had quite the air of a sick man.

"Come, Ian, why don't you eat? Why, you look as white as you did after the grizzly had clawed you all over."

This remark, and the bear-claw collar on the youth's neck, drew forth a question or two, but Ian was modest. He could not be induced to talk of his adventure, even when pressed to do so by Elsie.

"Come, then, if *you* won't tell it I will," said Victor; and thereupon he gave a glowing account of the great fight with the bear, the triumphant victory, and the long illness, which had well-nigh terminated fatally.

"But why did you not help him in the hunt?" asked Elsie of Victor, in a tone of reproach.

"Because he wouldn't let us; the reason why is best known to himself. Perhaps native obstinacy had to do with it."

"It was a passing fancy; a foolish one, perhaps, or a touch of vanity," said Ian, with a smile, "but it is past now, and I have paid for it.—Did you make fast the canoe?" he added, turning abruptly to the Indian, who was seated on his buffalo robe by the stove.

Without waiting for an answer he rose and descended the staircase to the passage, where poor Miss Trim had nearly met a watery grave.

Here the canoe was floating, and here he found one of the domestics.

"Has the wedding come off yet?" he asked in a low but careless tone, as he stooped to examine the fastening of the canoe.

"What wedding?" said the domestic, with a look of surprise.

"Why, the wedding of Mr. Ravenshaw's daughter."

"Oh no, Mr. Ian. It would be a strange time for a wedding. But it's all fixed to come off whenever the flood goes down. And she do seem happy about it. You see, sir, they was throw'd a good deal together here of late, so it was sort of natural they should make it up, and the master he is quite willin'."

This was enough. Ian Macdonald returned to the room above with the quiet air of a thoughtful schoolmaster and the callous solidity of a human petrifaction. Duty and death were the prominent ideas stamped upon his soul. He would not become reckless or rebellious. He would go through life doing his duty, and, when the time came, he would die!

They were talking, of course, about the flood when he returned and sat down.

Elsie was speaking. Ian was immediately fascinated as he listened to her telling Victor, with graphic power, some details of the great disaster—how dwellings and barns and stores had been swept away, and property wrecked everywhere, though, through the mercy of God, no lives had been lost. All this, and a great deal more, did Elsie and Cora and Mrs. Ravenshaw dilate upon, until Ian almost forgot his resolve.

Suddenly he remembered it. He also remembered that his father's house still existed, though it was tenantless, his father and Miss Martha having gone up to see friends at the Mountain.

"Come, Vic," he exclaimed, starting up, "I must go home. The old place may be forsaken, but it is not the less congenial on that account. Come."

Victor at once complied; they descended to the canoe, pushed out from the passage, and soon crossed the flood to Angus Macdonald's dwelling.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE "IMPOSSIBLE" ACCOMPLISHED.

AND *what* a dwelling Angus Macdonald's house had become!

"What a home-coming!" exclaimed Ian, thinking, in the bitterness of his soul, of Elsie as well as the house.

"It's awful!" said Victor, with a sympathetic glance at his friend.

The desolation was indeed complete—symbolic, Ian thought, of the condition of his own heart. Besides having eight or ten feet of water on its walls, all the lower rooms were utterly wrecked. A heavy log, ready for the saw-pit, had come down with the torrent, and, taking upon it the duties of a battering-ram, had charged the parlour window. Not only did it carry this bodily into the room, but it forced it into the passage beyond, where it jammed and stuck fast. The butt of this log, projecting several feet from the window, had intercepted straw and hay to such an extent that a miniature stack was formed, in which all sorts of light articles of furniture and débris had been caught. With the stubborn determination of a Celt, Angus had refused to remove his main door, which faced up stream. The result was that the flood removed it for him with a degree of violence that had induced Miss Martha to exclaim, "The house is goin' at last!" to which Angus had replied doggedly,

"Let it go. It will hef to go some day, what*ever*." But the house had not gone. It was only, as we have said, the main door which went, and was hurled through the passage into the kitchen, where it charged the back door, wrenched it off, and accompanied it to Lake Winnipeg with a tail of miscellaneous cooking utensils. Only shreds of the back windows remained hanging by twisted hinges to the frames, telling with mute eloquence of heroic resistance to the last gasp. Whatever had not been removed by Angus from the ground-floor of his house had been swept out at the windows and doorways, as with the besom of destruction.

Paddling in through the front door, the two friends disembarked from their canoe on the staircase, and ascended to the upper floor. Here everything betokened a hurried departure. Furniture was strewn about in disorder; articles of clothing were scattered broadcast, as if Miss Martha and her maid had been summoned to sudden departure, and had rummaged recklessly for their most cherished possessions. In the principal bedroom, on the best bed, stood Beauty in her native ugliness—the only living thing left to do the honours of the house.

"What a brute!" exclaimed Victor.

He seized a saucepan that stood handy, and hurled it at her. Beauty was equal to the emergency; she leaped up, allowed the pan to pass under her, fled shrieking through the window, and took refuge on the top of the house.

"I'm glad you missed her, Vic," said Ian, in a slightly reproachful tone; "she's an old friend of the family, and a harmless thing."

"Miss Trim would not agree with you in your opinion of her," returned Victor, with a laugh; "but I'm also glad I missed her. It was a sudden impulse that I

couldn't resist, and you know a fellow is scarcely accountable for his impulses."

"True; not for his impulses, but he is very accountable for actions resulting from impulse. If you had killed Beauty I should have had an irresistible impulse to pitch you over the window. If I were to do so in such circumstances would you hold me unaccountable?"

"I'm not sure," said Victor, with a grim smile. "But we'll change the subject; I don't like argument when I'm likely to get the worst of it. It's plain that you can do no good here, I therefore propose that we return to Willow Creek, take the small boat, and go up to the Mountain to see father, taking Tony and Petawanaquat along with us."

Ian shook his head with an expression of sadness that surprised his friend.

"No, Vic, no; my work with you in search of your brother is done, my father's home now claims my chief care. You are wrong in saying I can do no good here; look round at the wreck and mess. There is much to be done. Now I tell you what I'll do. I'll remain here all day and all night too. You will return home and send me the little punt, if it can be spared, for I shall have to row to the outhouses a good deal, and round the house too. As you see, nothing can be done without a craft of some sort. Send Peegwish with it, without Wildcat, she would only be in the way."

Victor tried to induce his friend to change his mind, but Ian was immoveable. He therefore returned to Willow Creek in the canoe, and sent Peegwish back with the punt—a tub-like little boat, with two small oars or sculls.

Left alone, Ian Macdonald leaned on the sill of a window in the gable of the house, from which he could see the house at Willow Creek, and sighed deeply. "So

then," he thought, "all my hopes are blighted; my airy castles are knocked down, my bear-hunting has been in vain; Elsie is engaged to Louis Lambert!"

There was no bitterness in his heart now, only a feeling of profound loneliness. As he raised himself with another sigh, the top of the window tipped off his cap, which fell into the water. He cared little for the loss, but stood watching the cap as it floated slowly away with the current, and compared its receding form with his dwindling joys. The current, which was not strong there, carried the cap straight to the knoll several hundred yards off, on which stood the smoking-box of old Sam Ravenshaw, and stranded it there.

The incident turned the poor youth's mind back to brighter days and other scenes, especially to the last conversation which he had held with the owner of the smoking-box. He was mentally enacting that scene over again when Peegwish pulled up to the house and passed under the window.

"Come along, you old savage," said Ian, with a good-humoured nod; "I want your help. Go round to the front and shove into the passage. The doorway's wide enough."

Peegwish, who was fond of Ian, replied to the nod with a hideous smile. In a few minutes the two were busily engaged in collecting loose articles and bringing things in general into order.

While thus engaged they were interrupted by Beauty cackling and screaming with tremendous violence. She was evidently in distress. Running up a ladder leading to the garret, Ian found that the creature had forced her way through a hole in the roof, and entangled herself in a mass of cordage thrown in a heap along with several stout ropes, or cables, which Angus had recently bought

with the intention of rigging out a sloop with which to traverse the great Lake Winnipeg. Setting the hen free, Ian returned to his work.

A few minutes later he was again arrested suddenly, but not by Beauty this time. He became aware of a peculiar sensation which caused a slight throbbing of his heart, and clearly proved that, although lacerated, or even severely crushed, that organ was not quite broken!

He looked round at Peegwish, and beheld that savage glaring, as if transfixed, with mouth and eyes equally wide open.

"Did you feel *that*, Peegwish?"

Yes, Peegwish had felt "that," and said so in an awful whisper without moving.

"Surely—no, it cannot have been the—"

He stopped short. There was a low, grinding sound, accompanied by a strange tremor in the planks on which they stood, as if the house were gradually coming alive! There could be no mistake. The flood had risen sufficiently to float the house, and it was beginning to slide from its foundations!

"Peegwish," he said, quickly dropping the things with which he had been busy, "is there a stout rope anywhere? Oh, yes; I forgot," he added, springing towards the attic. "Blessings on you, Beauty, for having guided me here!"

In a few seconds a stout rope or cable was procured. The end of this Ian ran out at the main doorway, round through the parlour window, and tied it in a trice. The other end he coiled in the punt, and soon made it fast to a stout elm, under whose grateful shade Angus Macdonald had enjoyed many a pipe and Martha many a cup of tea in other days. The tree bent slowly forward; the thick rope became rigid. Ian and Peegwish sat in the boat anxiously looking on.

In that moment of enforced inaction Ian conceived an idea! Thought is quick, quicker than light, which, we believe, has reached the maximum of "express speed" in material things. By intermittent flashes, so rapid that it resembled a stream of sparks, the whole plan rushed through his mind, from conception to completion. We can only give a suggestive outline, as follows. The knoll, the smoking-box, the smoker, his words, "Mark what I say. I will sell this knoll to your father, and give my daughter to you, when you take that house, and with your own unaided hands place it on this knoll!" The impossible had, in the wondrous course of recent events, came just within the verge of possibility—a stout arm, a strong will, coupled with a high flood—"There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood"—immortal and *prophetic* bard! There could be no chance of Elsie now, but even to win the right to claim her if she had been willing was better than nothing. In any case old Angus and the knoll would be united!

"Peegwish!" shouted Ian, turning on the unfortunate ex-brewer with a flushed face and blazing eyes that caused him to shrink in alarm, "can you sit still and *do nothing?*"

"Eh?" exclaimed Peegwish, in surprise.

"Bah!" said Ian, seizing the sculls.

The punt whirled round, leaped over the water, dashed through the doorway, and went crashing into the staircase. Before Peegwish could pick himself up, Ian had vanished up the stairs. The savage found him a moment later wildly selecting a rope from the heap that lay on the floor of the attic. As Peegwish entered, Ian suddenly turned on him with a gaze of increased intensity. Had the young man gone mad? Peegwish felt very uncomfortable. He had some reason to! Another thought had flashed into Ian's mind—the words "your own un-

aided hands" troubled him. Peegwish could be kept out of the boat, but he could not be kept from rendering aid of some sort, in some way or other. There was but one resource.

Ian sprang on Peegwish like a lion. The savage was both bold and strong, but he was elderly, and Ian was young and bolder; besides, he had the unusual strength of a half-madman at that moment. Down went the ex-brewer. He struggled hard. Ian crushed him in his arms, raised him, crammed him into a chair, seized a pliant rope and bound him therewith, winding him and the chair round and round in his haste—for there was no time to tie knots—until he resembled a gigantic spool of ravelled thread. Not a moment too soon! There was a snap outside; the rope was gone! A grind, a slide, and then a lurch, as of a ship at sea.

Ian is on the staircase now, in the punt, and out upon the flood with a stout rope fast to the stern and to the door-post. Panting from his recent exertions, and half-wild with the mingled excitement, danger, novelty, and fun of the thing, he draws two or three long breaths as he grasps the sculls and looks quickly round.

The house moves sluggishly, probably retarded by sunken shrubs, or dragging débris connected with the foundation. This is somewhat of a relief. There is time. He pulls ahead till the rope tightens, and then stands up in the punt to observe the situation critically. The current is bearing him straight towards the knoll. So far well; but there are two slightly diverging currents on right and left, caused by the knoll itself, which are so strong that if the house should get fairly into either of them no power that he possessed could prevent its being swept, on the one hand, into the main current of the Red River, on the other hand away over the flooded plains. To

watch with lynx eyes the slightest tendency to divergence on the part of the house now absorbs his whole being. But thought again intervenes. What if he should be observed by those at Willow Creek, and they should send assistance? Horror! But by good fortune all the males at the Creek have departed, and none are left but women. He casts one of the lynx glances in that direction—no one is coming. He breathes again, freely. Suddenly the house diverges a little to the right. Away flies the punt to the left, and he is just about to bend to the sculls with the force of Goliath, when he perceives his mistake—the divergence was to the *left!* In agonies of haste he shoots to the other side, where he discovers that the divergence must have been in his own excited brain, for the house still holds on the even tenor of its way; and Ian, pulling straight ahead, tightens the rope, and helps it on its voyage.

Presently there is a sudden, and this time a decided divergence to the right—probably caused by some undercurrent acting on the foundations. Away goes the punt in the opposite direction, and now Goliath and David together were babes to Ian! Talk of horse-power. Elephanto-hippopotamus-power is a more appropriate term. The muscles of his arms rise up like rolls of gutta-percha; the knotted veins stand out on his flushed forehead, but all in vain—the house continues to diverge, and Ian feeling the game to be all but lost, pulls with the concentrated energy of rage and despair. The sculls bend like wands, the rowlocks creak, the thole-pins crack. It won't do. As well might mortal man pull against Niagara falls.

At this moment of horrible disappointment the house touches something submerged—a post, a fence, a mound; he knows not nor cares what—which checks the divergence and turns the house back in the right direction.

What a rebound there is in Ian's heart! He would cheer if there were a cubic inch of air to spare in his labouring chest—but there is not, and what of it remains must be used in a tough pull to the opposite side, for the sheer given to the building has been almost too strong. In a few minutes his efforts have been successful. The house is bearing steadily though slowly down in the right direction.

Ian rests on his oars a few seconds, and wipes his heated brow.

So—in the great battle of life we sometimes are allowed to pause and breathe awhile in the very heat of conflict; and happy is it for us if our thoughts and hearts go out towards Him whose love is ever near to bless those who trust in it.

He is drawing near to the knoll now, and there seems every chance of success; but the nearer he draws to the goal the greater becomes the risk of divergence, for while the slack water at the head of the knoll becomes slacker, so that the house seems to have ceased moving, the diverging currents on either side become swifter, and their suction-power more dangerous. The anxiety of the pilot at this stage, and his consequent shooting from side to side, is far more trying than his more sustained efforts had been.

At last the punt reaches the smoking-box, which itself stands in several feet of water, for the ground of the knoll is submerged, its bushes alone being visible. There is only the length of the rope now between our hero and victory! In that length, however, there are innumerable possibilities. Even while he gazes the house bumps on something, slews round, and is caught by the current on the right. Before Ian has time to recover from his agony of alarm, and dip the sculls, it bumps again and slews to the

left; a third favouring bump sends it back into the slack water. The combined bumps have given an impulse to the house under the influence of which it bears straight down upon the knoll with considerable force. Its gable end is close to the smoking-box. Entranced with expectancy Ian sits in the punt panting and with eyes flashing. There is a sudden shock! Inside the house Peegwish and his chair are tumbled head over heels. Outside, the gable has just touched—as it were kissed—the smoking-box, Elsie's "summer-house;" Beauty, flapping her wings at that moment on the ridge-pole, crows, and Angus Macdonald's dwelling is, finally and fairly, hard and fast upon Sam Ravenshaw's knoll.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FOUND AND SAVED.

NOW it must not be imagined that old Liz, after being carried away by the flood, submitted to her fate without a struggle. It was not in her nature to give in without good reason. She did not sit down and wring her hands, or tear her hair, or reproach her destiny, or relieve her feelings by venting them on the old couple under her charge. In short, she did not fall back in her distress on any of the refuges of the imbecile.

Her first care was to arrange Daddy and Mrs. Winklemann in such a manner that they could sleep with some degree of comfort in their chairs. This she did by means of pillows and blankets, and, after accomplishing it, sat down on the wet bed to contemplate the pair. Her satisfaction was soon marred, however, by the discovery that Mrs. Winklemann was given to kicking in her sleep. In one of the spasmodic lunges with her lower limbs she gave Daddy's legs such a shake that the old gentleman was half awakened by the surprise.

It will be remembered that the pair were seated *vis-à-vis* in their respective arm-chairs, with a low table between them, and their legs resting thereon. To prevent a recurrence of the kick Liz put a piece of broken plank between them on the table, and by means of a rope wound round legs and table, effectually restrained the unruly members.

She then returned to her place on the soaking truckle-bed, and, leaning her wet shoulders against the wall, endeavoured to think what was to be done when the return of day should enable her to act. To act was easy to Liz, but thought was difficult. In attempting it she fell sound asleep. Her shape helped her; she did not require to lie down. Her head merely dropped on one of her fat shoulders. The rotundity of her frame rendered a collapse impossible. Thus she slept and snored until daylight shone through the parchment windows—until Daddy awoke her with a gasping cough.

"Hough! Hi! Liz, there's sumthin' wrang wi' my legs!"

"Hoots! haud yer gab!" cried his polite daughter, leaping from her damp couch into the water, with no other evidence of feeling than a sharp "Hech!" as the cold element laved her limbs. "There's naethin' wrang wi' yer legs, only I've tied them to the table to keep them frae tum'lin aff."

"Mine boy, have he comin' back?" asked Mrs. Winklemann, who was awakened by the conversation.

"Na; he's no come back yet, but he'll be here afore lang, nae doot. Be quiet noo, like guid bairns. I canna let yer legs doon yet, for the floor's dreedfu' wat. There!" she added, casting loose the ropes and arranging the limbs more comfortably; "jist let them lie where they are, and I'll gie ye yer brekfists in a meenit."

She was as good as her word. In a few minutes the submissive pair were busy with bread and cheese, which, with a little cold water, was the only breakfast poor Liz had to give them.

While the morning meal was being dispensed the anxious little woman thrust a bite or two into her own mouth, and ate as she moved about. Then she told the old people she was "gauin up the lum to look aboot her." Without

more ado she dipped into the fireplace and disappeared up the chimney.

Her surprise on reaching this point of vantage was very great. The cottage was no longer driven over the bosom of a wide sea, but floated quietly in a calm basin surrounded by trees. During the night it had been carried far down in the direction of Lake Winnipeg, and had got entangled in one of the clumps of wood with which some parts of that region were studded. The hut had been so completely thrust into the copse that it was quite encompassed by foliage, and nothing of the surrounding country was visible from the chimney-top. The only thing that remained obvious to old Liz was the fact that the hut still floated, and was held in position by a stout branch which had caught the roof.

We have said that thought—that is, profound or consecutive thought—was a trouble to old Liz. Her mind leaped in an interjectional, flashing manner. Her actions were impulsive. A tall tree, a squirrel, and a bird's-eye view flashed into her brain at the same moment. She desired the last, and proceeded to act like the second, by seizing a limb of the first, which hung conveniently at her elbow. But her emulation of the squirrel was not very successful, for, although a strong frame and powerful will are useful in climbing tall trees, petticoats, even when short, are against that operation. It is needless to say, however, that in the case of old Liz difficulties were only met to be overcome. In five or ten minutes she stood with dishevelled hair, bleeding hands, and torn garments, among the topmost branches of the tall tree, and surveyed the world beneath with feelings of mingled surprise and dismay. There was evidently no abatement of the flood. On her left hand lay a boundless lake; on her right there spread out a little archipelago of trees and bushes. While

she gazed her eye was arrested by two dark specks on the horizon. Could they be boats? Yes; they moved! Clearly they must be either boats or canoes.

One of the old woman's intellectual flashes occurred at this point. There was a fishing-rod in the hut below, a primitive one, such as Adam might have used in Eden—the branch of a tree.

Down came old Liz, much faster than she went up; slipping, scratching, rending, grasping, and clutching, until she gained the chimney, down which she went unceremoniously, alighting as formerly, with a squash which not only alarmed but besprinkled the old couple.

Liz caught up the rod, tied an apron to it, and then, using it as a lance, charged the fireplace. It stuck, of course, but Liz was in no mood to be baffled. She bent the rod powerfully and forced it up. Following it, she emerged from the chimney, and, with a spirit worthy of Excelsior, bore her banner to the tall tree-top, and fastened it to the topmost bough with the last remnant of her torn neckerchief.

It was in the morning of the day about which we now write, that Victor Ravenshaw and his friends arrived at the settlement. We have said that Michel Rollin set off alone in a canoe in search of his mother the moment he obtained sufficient information to enable him to act. At first he paddled wildly over the watery plain, as if mere exertion of muscle would accomplish his end, but soon he began to consider that without giving definite direction to his energies he could not hope for success. He therefore made straight for the mission station, where he found Mr. Cockran's family and people encamped on the stage, the minister himself being away in his canoe visiting some of his scattered flock, and offering them such comfort as only those can who truly trust in Christ. Here

he was advised to go to the Mountain, to which place it was probable his mother and grandfather would have been conveyed if picked up by any passing boat or canoe.

Deciding to do so, he paddled away at once with diminishing hopes and a heavy heart, for the evidences of total destruction around him were terribly real. He had not gone far when a canoe appeared on the horizon. There was one figure in it. As it drew near the figure seemed familiar. Nearer still, and he recognised it.

"Vinklemann!"

"Michel!"

The friends arrested their canoes by grasping hands.

"I seek for ma mère," said the half-breed.

"I for mine moder," returned the German.

A hurried consultation ensued. It was of no use going to the Mountain. Winklemann had just come from it, having failed to find his mother. He was still suffering from the effects of his recent accident, but he could not wait. He would continue the search till he died. Rollin was of the same mind, though neither he nor his friend appeared likely to die soon. They resolved to continue the search together.

Both of them were thoroughly acquainted with the Red River plains in all directions, but Rollin was more versed in the action of water. The greater part of his boyhood had been spent in canoeing and hunting expeditions with his father, from whom he inherited the French tongue and manners which showed so much more powerfully than the Scotch element in his composition. After his father's death he had consorted and hunted much with Peegwish, who spoke Indian and French, but remarkably little English. Peegwish was also a splendid canoe-man, so that Rollin had come to study with great intelligence the flow and effect of currents of water, whether deep or

shallow, narrow or broad. Hence when Winklemann related circumstantially all he had done, he shook his head and gave it as his opinion that he had not gone the right way to work at all, and that, according to the lie of the land and the height of the flood, it was certain the hut must have been carried far below that part of the settlement in the direction of the lower fort.

Poor Winklemann was so worn out with unsuccessful searching that he was only too glad to follow wherever Michel Rollin chose to lead. Hence it came to pass that in the afternoon of the same day the searchers came in view of the tall tree where old Liz had hoisted her flag of distress.

"Voilà!" exclaimed Michel, on first catching sight of the ensign.

"Vat is dat?" said his companion, paddling closer alongside of his friend, and speaking in a hoarse whisper.

"It look like a flag," said Rollin, pushing on with increased vigour. "There 's something like one crow below it," he added, after a short time.

"It have stranch voice for von crow," said the German.

He was right. The yell of triumphant joy uttered by old Liz when she saw that her signal had been observed was beyond the imitative powers of any crow. As the poor creature waved her free arm, and continued to shout, while her loose hair tossed wildly round her sooty face, she presented a spectacle that might well have caused alarm not unmixed with awe even in a manly breast; but there was a certain tone in the shouts which sent a sudden thrill to the heart of Rollin, causing him, strange to say, to think of lullabies and infant days! With eyeballs fixed on the tree-top, open-mouthed and breathing quick, he paddled swiftly on.

"Michel," said Winklemann, in a whisper, even hoarser than before, "your moder!"

Rollin replied not, but gave a stentorian roar, that rolled grandly over the water.

Why was it that old Liz suddenly ceased her gesticulations, lifted her black brows in unutterable surprise, opened her mouth, and became a listening statue? Did she too recognise tones which recalled other days—and the puling cries of infancy? It might have been so. Certain it is that when the shout was repeated she broke down in an effort to reply, and burst into mingled laughter and tears, at the same time waving her free arm more violently than ever.

This was too much for the branch on which she had been performing. It gave way, and old Liz suddenly came down, as sailors have it, "by the run." She crashed through the smaller branches of the tree-top, which happily broke her fall, bounded from mass to mass of the thicker foliage below, and finally came down on a massive bough which, shunting her clear of the tree altogether, and clear of the hut as well, sent her headlong into the water.

With something like frozen blood and marrow, Michel witnessed the fall. A few seconds more and his canoe went crashing through the leafy screen that hid the hut. Old Liz was up and floundering about like a black seal, or mermaid. She could not swim, but, owing to some peculiarity of her remarkable frame, she could not sink. Her son was at her side in a moment, seized her, and tried to kiss her. In his eagerness the canoe overturned, and he fell into her arms and the water at the same time.

It was a joyful though awkward meeting. Much water could not quench the love wherewith the poor creature strained Michel to her heart. Winklemann came up in

time to rescue both, and dragged them to the door-step of the floating hut, the door of which he burst open with a single kick, and sprang in.

Who shall attempt to describe the meeting that followed? We ask the question because we feel unequal to the task. There issued from the hut a roll of German gutturals. Winklemann, rushing through two feet of water, seized his mother's hand and fell on his knees beside her. He was thus, of course, submerged to the waist; but he recked not—not he! Michel and old Liz entered, dripping like water-nymphs, and sat down on the soppy bed. Daddy, impressed with the idea that a good practical joke was being enacted, smiled benignantly like a guardian angel.

"Now den, zee night draws on. Ve must be gone," said Winklemann, turning to Rollin; "git zee canoes ready—qveek!"

Both canoes were soon got ready; blankets and pillows were spread in the centre of each. Mrs. Winklemann was lifted carefully into one; Daddy, as carefully, into the other. Old Liz quietly took her seat in the bow of Daddy's canoe; her son sat down in the stern, while Herr Winklemann took charge of that which contained his mother.

"No room to take any of de property to-night, ma mère," said Michel.

"Hoots! niver heed," replied Liz.

"No, I vill not heed. Moreover, Veenklemann and moi ve vill retoorn demorrow."

As he spoke he chanced to look up and saw the apron which had guided him to the spot waving gently at the tree-top. In a few seconds he was beside it. Cuttingthe staff free, he descended and stuck it in the bow of his canoe as a trophy. Thus they paddled away from the old home.

It was night when they reached the camp of the settlers

on the Little Mountain. The homeless people were busy with their evening meal, and, sad though their case was, the aspect of things just then did not convey the idea of distress. The weather was fine; camp-fires blazed cheerfully lighting up bronzed and swarthy men, comely women, and healthy children, with a ruddy glow, while merry laughter now and then rose above the general hum, for children care little for unfelt distress, and grown people easily forget it in present comfort. Ruined though they were, many of them felt only the warmth of the hour.

There was a shout of welcome when Winklemann's canoe was observed emerging from surrounding darkness, and a cheer burst from those who first heard the glad news—"The old folk saved!" But that was a mere chirp to the roar of congratulation that rang out when the little party landed, and the rescuers strode into camp bearing the rescued in their arms.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A SURPRISING DISCOVERY—AND MORE.

WHEN Ian Macdonald had seen his father's house fairly stranded on the knoll, and had made it fast there with innumerable ropes, thin and thick, as the Lilliputians secured Gulliver, he bethought him that it was high time to visit the Little Mountain, to which his father had gone on at that time, and inform him of the amazing fact.

Before setting off, however, common propriety required that he should look in at Willow Creek in passing, not only to let them know what had occurred, if they had not already observed it, but to ask if there was any message for Mr. Ravenshaw.

First releasing Peegwish, who now regarded him as a maniac, he embarked with him in the punt, and rowed over.

It was by that time approaching the afternoon. Before that—indeed before the house of Angus had gone afloat—Tony, Victor, and Petawanaquat had gone off to the Little Mountain in search of Mr. Ravenshaw. Those of the family who remained behind had been so busy about their various avocations, that no one had observed the sudden removal of their neighbour's dwelling.

"Cora! quick! come here!" cried Elsie, in a tone that alarmed her sister. "Am I dreaming?"

Cora looked out at the window, where the other stood

as if petrified. "Angus Macdonald's house on the knoll!" she screamed.

The scream brought her mother and Miss Trim hurriedly into the room. They stared in speechless amazement, and rubbed their eyes, but they could not rub the house of Angus Macdonald off the knoll.

"There comes Ian in the punt," said Cora; "he will explain it."

"He seems to be miserable enough about it if one may judge from the expression of his face," observed Miss Trim.

Poor Ian was indeed profoundly miserable. The excitement of the recent event over, his mind insisted on reverting to his forlorn condition. "So near," he thought, "and yet to miss her! Old Ravenshaw could not refuse her to me now, but of what avail is his consent without Elsie's? Ah, Lambert! you're a lucky fellow, and it is shameful in me to wish it were otherwise when it makes Elsie happy."

Ian now tried to act philosophically, but it would not do. In the upper room he gave the ladies a brief account of his adventure. He spoke in a cold, passionless manner, without looking once at Elsie. Of course, he did not reveal the motives that had influenced him. When he had finished he rose abruptly to leave.

"Don't go yet," said Mrs. Ravenshaw, "there's a bit of carpentering that I want done, and there is not a man left at the house to do it. The last gale loosened some of the shingles on the roof, and one of them slipped down to-day, so that the place leaks.—Go, Elsie, and show him the shingle near the attic window."

Ian looked at Elsie, and his resolves vanished like smoke. He went meekly to the attic.

"You are much changed," said Elsie, "since you went on this trip."

"Changed? Not for the worse, I hope," said Ian.

"Well, scarcely for the better," returned the girl with a smile. "See, here is the window, and the loose shingle is close to the sill. You won't require to go out on the roof. There is father's tool-box. If you want anything some of us will be in the room below. You may call, or come down."

"Stay, Elsie," said the youth, turning abruptly on her. "You say I am changed. Well, perhaps I am. I've gone through pretty severe hardships since we parted, and the injuries I received on gaining *this* have left their mark."

He touched, as he spoke, the splendid bear-claw collar which still graced his neck.

"I doubt not you have suffered," returned Elsie, in a softened tone, "but you are now well, or nearly so, and your reason is not a sufficient one to account for your being rude to all your old friends, and taking no interest in anything."

"Am I, then, so rude, so callous?" rejoined Ian, drawing his hand across his brow. "Ah! Elsie, if—if—but what am I saying? Forgive me! I think that grizzly must have touched my brain when he had me under his paw. There can be no harm, however, in telling you that a wish, lightly expressed by you long ago, has been the motive power which led to the procuring of this collar. Will you accept it of me now? It is but a trifle, yet, being a bad hunter, and more used to grammars than to guns, it cost me no trifle of anxiety and trouble before I won it. I am afraid that the hope of procuring it for you had almost as much to do with cheering me on as the hope of finding Tony. Nay, don't refuse it, Elsie, from one who has known you so long that he feels almost as if he might regard you as a sister."

He took off the collar as he spoke, and, with a return

of his wonted heartiness, presented it to Elsie. There was something in his manner, however, which induced her to blush and hesitate.

"Your kindness in searching for Tony we can never forget or repay," she said quickly, "and—and—"

She paused.

"Well, well," continued Ian, a little impatiently; "I did not mean to talk of Tony just now. Surely you won't refuse a gift from so old a friend as I on the eve of my departure for Canada?"

"For Canada!" echoed Elsie, in surprise.

"Yes. I leave the instant I can get my affairs in Red River settled."

"And you return?"

"Never!"

Elsie looked at the youth in undisguised astonishment. She, too, began to suspect that a claw of the collar must have touched his brain.

"But why hesitate?" continued Ian. "Surely you cannot refuse me so simple a favour! Even Lambert himself would approve of it in the circumstances."

"Lambert!" exclaimed Elsie, with increasing amazement; "what has Lambert got to do with it?"

It was now Ian's turn to look surprised.

"Forgive me if I have touched on a forbidden subject; but as every one in the settlement seems to know of your engagement to Lambert, I thought—"

"*My* engagement!" interrupted Elsie. "It is Cora who is engaged to Lambert."

A sudden and mighty shock seemed to fall on Ian Macdonald. He slightly staggered, paled a little, then became fiery red, leaped forward, and caught the girl's hand.

"Elsie! Elsie!" he exclaimed, in tones of suppressed eagerness, "will—will you accept the collar?"

He put it over her head as he spoke, and she blushed deeply, but did not refuse it.

"And, Elsie," he added, in a deeper voice, drawing her nearer, "will you accept the hunter?"

"No," answered Elsie, with *such* an arch smile; "but I would accept the schoolmaster if he were not going away to Canada for—"

She did not finish the sentence, because something shut her mouth.

"You're taking a *very* long time to that shingle," called Mrs. Ravenshaw from below. "Have you got everything you want, Ian?"

"Yes," replied Ian promptly; "I've got all that the world contains."

"What's that you say?"

"It will soon be done now, mother," cried Elsie, breaking away with a soft laugh, and hurrying down-stairs.

She was right. A few minutes sufficed to put the loose shingle to rights, and then Ian descended to the room below.

"What a time you have been about it!" said Cora, with a suspicious glance at the young man's face; "and how flushed you are! I had no idea that fixing a loose shingle was such hard work."

"Oh yes, it's tremendously hard work," said Ian, recovering himself; "you have to detach it from the roof, you know, and it is wonderful the tenacity with which nails hold on sometimes; and then there's the fitting of the new shingle to the—"

"Come, don't talk nonsense," said Cora; "you know that is not what kept you. You have been telling some secret to Elsie. What was it?"

Instead of answering, Ian turned with a twinkle in his eyes, and asked abruptly,

"By the way—when does Louis Lambert return?"

It was now Cora's turn to flush.

"I don't know," she said, "bending quickly over her work; "how should *I* know? But you have not answered my question.—Oh! look there!"

She pointed to the doorway, where a huge rat was seen seated, looking at them as if in solemn surprise at the trifling nature of their conversation.

Not sorry to have a reason for escaping, Ian uttered a laughing shout, threw his cap at the creature, missed, and rushed out of the room in chase of it. Of course he did not catch it; but, continuing his flight down-stairs, he jumped into the punt, pushed through the passage, and out at the front door. As he passed under the windows he looked up with a smile, and saw Cora shaking her little fist at him.

"You have not improved in your shooting," she cried; "you missed the rat."

"Never mind," he replied, "Lambert will fetch his rifle and hunt for it; and, I say, Cora, ask Elsie to explain how shingles are put on. She knows all about it."

He kissed his hand as he turned the corner of the house, and rowed away.

A dark shadow falling over him at the moment caused him to turn round, and there, to his amazement, stood one of his father's largest barns! It had been floated, like many other houses, from its foundation, and, having been caught by a diverging current, had been stranded on the lawn at the side of Mr. Ravenshaw's house so as to completely shut out the view in that direction.

Intense amusement followed Ian's feeling of surprise. His first impulse was to return and let the inmates of Willow Creek know what had occurred; but bethinking himself that they would find it out the first time they chanced to look from the windows on that side of the house, and observing that the day was advancing, he

changed his mind and rowed away in the direction of the plains, chuckling heartily as he meditated on the very peculiar alterations which the flood had effected on the properties of his father and Samuel Ravenshaw, to say nothing of the probable result in regard to his own future.

A stiffish breeze sprang up soon after he left. Being a fair wind, he set up a rag of sail that fortunately chanced to be in the punt, and advanced swiftly on his voyage to the Little Mountain.

On their way to the same place, at an earlier part of the day, Victor and Tony, with Petawanaquat and Meekeye, touched at the mission station. Many of the people were still on the stage, but Mrs. Cockran, finding that the water had almost ceased to rise, and that the parsonage still stood fast, returned to the garret of her old home. Here she received Victor and the recovered Tony with great delight. It chanced to be about the period which Tony styled feeding-time, so that, although Victor was anxious to reach his father as soon as possible, he agreed to remain there for an hour or so. While they were enjoying the hospitality of the garret, Petawanaquat was entertained in a comparatively quiet corner of the stage, by a youth named Sinclair, a Scotch half-breed, who had been a pupil in Ian Macdonald's school, and, latterly, an assistant.

Petawanaquat had made the acquaintance of young Sinclair on his first visit to Red River. They were kindred spirits. Both were earnest men, intensely desirous of finding out truth—truth in regard to everything that came under their notice, but especially in reference to God and religion. This grave, thoughtful disposition and earnest longing is by no means confined to men of refinement and culture. In all ranks and conditions among men, from the so-called savage upwards, there have been

found more or less profound thinkers, and honest logical reasoners, who, but for the lack of training, might have become pillars in the world of intellect.

Both Sinclair and Petawanaquat were naturally quiet and modest men, but they were not credulous. They did not absolutely disbelieve their opponents, or teachers; but, while giving them full credit for honesty and sincerity —because themselves were honest and sincere—they nevertheless demanded proof of every position advanced, and utterly refused to take anything on credit. Bigoted men found them "obstinate" and "troublesome." Capable reasoners found them "interesting." Sinclair possessed a considerable amount of education, and spoke the Indian language fluently. Petawanaquat, although densely ignorant, had an acute and logical mind.

To look at them as they sat there, spoon in hand, over a pan of burgout, one would not readily have guessed the drift of their conversation.

"It almost broke my heart," said Sinclair, "when I heard you had stolen Mr. Ravenshaw's boy, and words cannot express my joy that you have repented and brought him back. What induced you to steal him?"

"My bad heart," replied the Indian.

"Was it then your *good* heart that made you bring him back?" asked Sinclair, with a keen glance at his friend.

"No; it was the voice of the Great Spirit in Petawanaquat that made him do it. The voice said, 'Forgive! Return good for evil!'"

"Ah; you learned these words here, and have been pondering them."

"Petawanaquat heard them here; he did not learn them here," returned the red man quietly. "Listen!" he continued, with a sudden glow of animation on his

countenance, "My brother is young, but he knows much, and is wise. He will understand his friend. In the mountains I pitched my tent. It was a lonely spot. No trappers or Indians came there, but one day in winter a paleface came. He was a servant of the Great Spirit. He talked much. I said little, but listened. The paleface was very earnest. He spoke much of Jesus. He told the story of His love, His sufferings, His death. He spoke of little else. When he was gone I asked Jesus to forgive me. He forgave. Then I was glad, but I looked at Tonyquat and my spirit was troubled. Then it was that I heard the voice of the Great Spirit. It did not fall on my ear: it fell upon my heart like the rippling of a mountain stream. It said, 'Send the child back to his father.' I obeyed the Voice, and I am here."

With sparkling eyes Sinclair stretched out his right hand, and, grasping that of the red man, said in a deep voice—"My brother!"

Petawanaquat returned the grasp in silence. Before either of them could resume the conversation they were interrupted by Victor shouting from a window of the parsonage to fetch the canoe.

A few minutes later they were again on their way.

CHAPTER XXV.

BRINGS THINGS TO A POINT.

WHILE Tony was being received at the old home, as already related, and Michel Rollin and Winklemann were rescuing their mothers, and Ian Macdonald was busy transplanting his father's house, Mr. Samuel Ravenshaw was sitting disconsolate on the Little Mountain.

Lest the reader should still harbour a false impression in regard to that eminence, we repeat that the Little Mountain was not a mountain; it was not even a hill. It was merely a gentle elevation of the prairie, only recognisable as a height because of the surrounding flatness.

Among the settlers encamped on this spot the children were the most prominent objects in the scene, because of their noise and glee and mischievous rapidity of action. To them the great floods had been nothing but a splendid holiday. Such camping out, such paddling in many waters, such games and romps round booths and tents, such chasing of cattle and pigs and poultry and other live stock, and, above all, such bonfires! It was a glorious time! No lessons, no being looked after, no restraint of any kind. Oh! it *was* such fun!

It was the sight of this juvenile glee that made Mr. Ravenshaw disconsolate. Seated in the opening of a tent

he smoked his pipe, and looked on at the riotous crew with a tear in each eye, and one, that had overflowed, at the point of his nose. The more these children laughed and shouted the more did the old gentleman feel inclined to weep. There was one small boy—a half-breed, with piercing black eyes and curly hair, whose powers of mischief were so great that he was almost equal to the lost Tony. He did his mischief quietly, and, as it were, with restrained enthusiasm. For instance, this imp chanced to be passing a group of Canadian buffalo-hunters seated round one of the camp-fires enjoying a can of tea. One of them raised a pannikin to his lips. The imp was at his elbow like a flash of light; the elbow was tipped, by the merest accident, and half of the tea went over the hunter's legs. The awful look of hypocritical self-condemnation put on by the imp was too much for the hunter, who merely laughed, and told him to "get along," which he did with a yell of triumph. Old Mr. Ravenshaw felt a strong desire to embrace that boy on the spot, so vividly did he bring before his mind his beloved Tony!

Sometimes the older people in that miscellaneous camp emulated the children in riotous behaviour. Of course, in such an assemblage there were bad as well as good people, and some of the former, taking advantage of the unprotected state of things, went about the camp pilfering where opportunity offered. One of these was at last caught in the act, and the exasperated people at once proceeded to execute summary justice. The thief was a big, strong, sulky-looking fellow. He was well known as an incorrigible idler, who much preferred to live on the labours of other men than to work. The captor was Baptiste Warder, the half-breed chief who had acted so conspicuous a part in the buffalo hunt of the previous season.

"Let 's string him up," cried John Flett, as Warder, grasping the thief's collar, led him into the middle of the camp.

But there were two objections to this proceeding. First, it was deemed too severe for the offence, and, second, there was not a tree or a post, or any convenient object, whereon to hang him.

"Roast him alive!" suggested David Mowat, but this also was laughed at as being disproportioned to the offence.

"Duck him!" cried Sam Hayes.

This was hailed as a good proposal, though some were of opinion it was too gentle. However, it was agreed to, with this addition, that the culprit's capote should be cut to pieces. In order to accomplish the latter part of the ceremony with more ease, one of the men removed the capote by the simple process of ripping the back up to the neck, and slitting the sleeves with a scalping-knife. The man here showed a disposition to resist, and began to struggle, but a quiet squeeze from Warder convinced him that it was useless. He was then seized by four men, each of whom, grasping an arm or a leg, carried him down to the water's edge. They passed Mr. Ravenshaw in the opening of his tent. He rose and followed them.

"Serves him right," said the old gentleman, on hearing who it was, and what he had done.

"Ay, he 's done worse than that," said one of the men who carried him. "It 's only last Sunday that he stole a blanket out of old Renton's tent, and that, too, when Mr. Cockran was holding service here; but we 'll put a stop to such doings. Now, then, heave together—one, two, three—"

The four powerful men hurled the thief into the air with vigour. He went well up and out, came down with

a sounding splash, and disappeared amid shouts of laughter. He rose instantly, and with much spluttering regained the shore, where he was suffered to depart in peace by the executioners of the law, who returned quietly to their tents.

Mr. Ravenshaw was left alone, moralising on the depravity of human nature. The sun was setting in a blaze of golden light, and tipping the calm waters of the flood with lines of liquid fire. Turning from the lovely scene with a sigh, the old trader was about to return to his tent when the sound of a voice arrested him. It came from a canoe which had shot suddenly from a clump of half-submerged trees by which it had been hitherto concealed.

As the canoe approached, Mr. Ravenshaw ascended a neighbouring mound to watch it. Soon it touched the shore, and three of its occupants landed—an Indian and two boys. A woman who occupied the bow held the frail bark steady. The Indian at once strode up towards the camp. In doing so he had to pass the mound where Mr. Ravenshaw was seated on a ledge of rock. He looked at the trader, and stopped. At the same moment the latter recognised Petawanaquat!

If a mine had been sprung beneath his feet he could not have leaped up with greater celerity. Then he stood for a moment rooted to the spot as if transformed into stone—with mouth open and eyes glaring.

To behold his enemy standing thus calmly before him, as if they had only parted yesterday and were on the best of terms, with no expression on his bronzed visage save that of grave solemnity, was almost too much for him! He grasped convulsively the heavy stick which he usually carried. The thought of the foul wrong done him by the red man rushed into his memory with overwhelming force. It did not occur to him to remember

his own evil conduct! With a roar of rage worthy of a buffalo bull he rushed towards him. The red man stood firm. What the result would have been if they had met no one can tell, for at that moment an Indian boy ran forward and planted himself right in front of the angry man.

"Father!"

Mr. Ravenshaw dropped his cudgel and his jaw, and stood aghast! The painted face was that of a savage, but the voice was the voice of Tony!

The old man shut his mouth and opened his arms. Tony sprang into them with a wild cheer that ended in a burst of joyful tears!

The way in which that boy hugged his sire and painted his face all over by rubbing his own against it was a sight worth seeing.

It had been a concerted plan between Tony and Victor that the latter was to keep a little in the background while the former should advance and perplex his father a little before making himself known, but Tony had over-estimated his powers of restraint. His heart was too large for so trifling a part. He acted up to the promptings of nature, as we have seen, and absolutely howled with joy.

"Don't choke him, Tony," remonstrated Victor; "mind, you are stronger than you used to be."

"Ha! Choke me?" gasped Mr. Ravenshaw; "try it, my boy; just try it!"

Tony did try it. But we must not prolong this scene. It is enough to say that when Tony had had his face washed and stood forth his old self in all respects—except that he looked two or three sizes larger, more sunburnt, and more manly—his father quietly betook himself to his tent, and remained there for a time in solitude.

Thereafter he came out, and assuming a free-and-easy, off-hand look of composure, which was clearly hypocritical, ordered tea. This was soon got ready, and the joyful party seated themselves round the camp-fire, which now sent its ruddy blaze and towering column of sparks into the darkening sky.

Victor was not long in running over the chief outlines of their long chase, and also explained the motives of the red man—as far as he understood them—in bringing Tony back.

"Well, Vic," said Mr. Ravenshaw, with a puzzled look, "it's a strange way of taking his revenge of me. But after all, when I look at him there, sucking away at his calumet with that pleased, grave face, I can't help thinkin' that you and I, Christians though we call ourselves, have something to learn from the savage. I've been mistaken, Vic, in my opinion of Petawanaquat. Anyhow, his notion of revenge is better than mine. It must be pleasanter to him now to have made us all so happy than if he had kept Tony altogether, or put a bullet through *me*. It's a clever dodge, too, for the rascal has laid me under an obligation which I can never repay—made me his debtor for life, in fact. It's perplexing, Vic; very much so, but satisfactory at the same time."

There were still more perplexing things in store for old Samuel Ravenshaw that night.

"But why did you not bring Ian Macdonald along with you, Vic?" he asked. "I expect his father here this evening from Fort Garry, where he went in the morning for some pemmican."

Before Victor had time to reply, Ian himself stepped out of the surrounding darkness. Just previous to this the party had been joined by Herr Winklemann and Michel Rollin, who, after seeing their respective mothers

made as comfortable as possible in the circumstances, had been going about the camp chatting with their numerous friends. Louis Lambert had also joined the circle, and Peegwish stood modestly in the background.

"Come along, Ian, we were just talking of you," said Mr. Ravenshaw heartily, as he rose and extended his hand, for the disagreeables of his last meeting with the young man had been obliterated by the subsequent kindness of Ian in going off to aid in the search for Tony.

Ian returned the grasp with good will, but he soon destroyed the good understanding by deliberately, and it seemed unwisely, referring to the two points which still rankled in the old man's breast.

"Tut, man," said Mr. Ravenshaw, a little testily, "why drag in the subjects of the knoll and my Elsie to-night, of all nights in the year?"

"Because I cannot avoid it," said Ian. "Events have occurred to-day which compel me to speak of them—of the knoll, at least."

"Oh, for the matter of that," interrupted the old gentleman angrily, "you may speak of Elsie too, and the old woman, and Cora, and all the household to boot, for all that I care."

"I come here to claim a right," went on Ian, in a calm voice. "It is well known that Samuel Ravenshaw is a man of his word; that what he promises he is sure to perform; that he never draws back from an agreement."

This speech took Mr. Ravenshaw by surprise. He looked round until his eyes rested on Tony. Then he said, in a slightly sarcastic tone—

"What you say is true. Even Tony knows that."

"Tonyquat knows that what Ian says of his white father is true," said the boy.

At the name Tonyquat, which was the only word of

the sentence he understood, Petawanaquat cast a look of affection on Tony, while his father and the others burst into a laugh at the child's sententious gravity. But Tony maintained his Indian air, and gazed solemnly at the fire.

"Well, go on, Ian," said the old gentleman, in somewhat better humour.

"You remember our last meeting in the smoking-box on the knoll?" continued Ian.

"Too well," said the other, shortly.

"Part of what you said was in the following words: 'Mark what I say. I will sell this knoll to your father, and give my daughter to *you*, when you take that house, and with your own unaided hands place it on the top of this knoll!'"

"Well, you have a good memory, Ian. These are the words I used when I wished to convince you of the impossibility of your obtaining what you wanted," said Mr. Ravenshaw, with the determined air of a man who is resolved not to be turned from his purpose.

"What you wanted to convince me of," rejoined Ian. "has nothing to do with the question. It is what you *said* that I have to do with."

Again the irascible fur-trader's temper gave way as he said—

"Well, what I said I have said, and what I said I'll stick to."

"Just so," returned Ian, with a peculiar smile, "and, knowing this, I have come here to claim the knoll for my father and Elsie for myself."

This was such a glaring absurdity in the old gentleman's eyes that he uttered a short contemptuous laugh. At that moment Angus Macdonald appeared upon the scene. His look of amazement at beholding his son may be imagined. Angus was not, however, demonstrative.

He only stepped across the fire, and gave Ian a crushing squeeze of the hand.

"It iss fery glad to see you I am, my poy, but it is taken py surprise I am, what*ever*. An' ho! (as his eyes fell on Tony) it iss the child you hef found. Well, it iss a happy father you will pe this night, Mr. Ruvnshaw. I wish you choy. Don't let me stop you, whatever. It wass something interesting you would pe telling these chentlemen when I came up."

"I was just going to tell them, father," said Ian, resting a hand on his sire's shoulder, "that I have come straight from Willow Creek with the news that this day I have, with my own unaided hands"—he cast a sidelong glance at the old gentleman—"transported your house to Mr. Ravenshaw's knoll, and have asked Elsie Ravenshaw to be my wife, and been accepted."

"Morcover," continued Ian, in a calm, steady tone, "my father's biggest barn has, without any assistance from any one, stranded itself on Mr. Ravenshaw's lawn!"

"Pless me, Ian, iss it jokin' ye are?"

"No, father. It's in earnest I am."

Good reader, the aspect of the party—especially of old Ravenshaw and Angus—on hearing these announcements is beyond our powers of description; we therefore prefer to leave it to your own vivid imagination!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAST.

A CHANGE—like the flashing colours of a kaleidoscope; like the phantoms of a dream! Red River settlement is dry again, or drying;



"TURNING HIS BLACK EYES ON THE FLASHING SUN, HE STRETCHED OUT HIS HAND."

but ah! what a scene of wreck and ruin! It looks as if the settlement had been devastated by fire and sword as well as water. Broken-down houses, uprooted fences and trees, piles of débris, beds and boxes, billets of wood and blankets, habiliments and hay, carioles and cordage and carcasses of cattle, all mixed up more or less, and cemented together with mud. Nearly every house in the settlement had been destroyed.

Of course many a day passed after the great catastrophe before Red River was itself again, with its river confined to the proper channel, and its prairies rolling with grass-waves; but it was not long before the energetic inhabitants returned to their labours and their desolated houses to begin the world anew. About the 1st of May the flood began; by the 20th of the same month it had reached its height, and on the 22d the waters began to assuage. On that day they had made a decided fall of two inches. The height to which the waters had risen above the level of ordinary years was fifteen feet. The flood subsided very gradually. About the middle of June the ploughs were at work again, and the people busy sowing what was left to them of their seed-barley and potatoes.

Among the busiest of the busy at that bustling time was Peegwish. While others were hard at work clearing, rebuilding, ploughing, and sowing, our noble savage was fishing. The labour of this occupation consisted chiefly in staring at his line, while he sat on a mud-heap on the river bank, and smoked in the pleasant sunshine. Occasionally he roused himself to haul out a goldeye. Wildcat assisted him ably in his labours, and still more ably in the after consumption of the goldeyes. Angus Macdonald discovered them thus occupied, and had difficulty in resisting his desire to pitch the lazy fellow into the river.

"What wass you doin' there?" he cried. "Wass it wastin' your time wi' small fush you will pe doin', an' every wan else workin' hard? Go an' putt the ox in the cart an' haul watter. Look sharp!"

Angus concluded with some deep gutturals in Gaelic which we cannot translate, and Peegwish, rising hastily, went off to do as he was bid. But Peegwish was a poor water-drawer. The ox turned out to be more obstinate than himself, and also more callous, for when it became fatigued with hauling the water-barrel to and fro, it stopped at the foot of the slope near a corner of the garden, and refused to budge. Peegwish lashed it, but it did not feel—at all events, it did not care. He tried to wheedle it, but failed: he became abusive, and used bad language to the ox, but without success. He was in the height of his distress when Petawanaquat passed by with a load of firewood on his shoulder. The red man having been reconciled to his old enemy, had remained at Red River, partly to assist him, partly to see the end of the flood, and partly to be near his friend Sinclair and his adopted son Tonyquat. From the latter he could not tear himself away.

The Indian stood and gazed solemnly at his brother savage for some minutes, then he threw down his load, and entering the garden, cut the remains of a cabbage which had survived the flood. With this he went to the ox and held it to its nose. The animal advanced; the Indian retreated a few steps. The ox advanced again in the hope of obtaining a savoury mouthful, but the Indian still retreated. Thus, step by step, the slope was ascended!

"Wah!" said Petawanaquat, with a grave look, as he handed the cabbage to Peegwish, who profited by the lesson, and gained his ends.

"She's fery lazy," muttered Angus to himself—referring to Peegwish—as he went up the river-bank towards

the knoll, where his house now stood triumphantly; "fery lazy; more lazy than—than—"

Failing to find a just comparison, he tailed off in expressive but untranslatable Gaelic.

"Goot tay to you, Muster Ruvnshaw," said Angus, on reaching the summit of the knoll. "It wass fery goot of you, whatever, to let my hoose stand here."

"Don't mention it, Angus," said the old gentleman, removing his pipe with one hand, and extending the other. "It would be difficult to prevent it remaining where it is now. Besides, I passed my word, you know, and that cannot be broken. Come, sit down. I'm thankful your house was so considerate as to spare my smoking-box, though it has given it a shove of a few feet to the south'ard. In other respects the house is an advantage, for while it has not hurt the view, it serves to protect my box from the quarter which used to be exposed to east winds. But there is one stipulation I have to make, Angus, before the bargain is closed."

"An' what may that pe?" asked Angus, with a shade of anxiety.

"That this smoking-box and the ground on which it stands, together with the footpath leading up to it, shall remain my property as long as I live."

Angus smiled. He had the peculiarity of turning the corners of his mouth down instead of up when he did so, which gave a remarkably knowing look to his smile.

"You shall pe fery welcome," he said. "And now, Muster Ruvnshaw, I came here to say a word for my poy. You know it iss natural that Ian will pe getting anxious apout the wedding. It iss impatient he will pe, whatever. He is a little shy to speak to you himself, and he will pe botherin' me to—"

"All right, Angus, I understand," interrupted Mr.

Ravenshaw. "You know both he and Lambert are busy removing your barn from my lawn. When that is finished we shall have the weddings. My old woman wants 'em to be on the same day, but nothing can be done till the barn is removed, for I mean to have the dance on that lawn on the double-wedding day. So you can tell them that."

Angus did tell them that, and it is a remarkable fact which every one in the establishment observed, that the unsightly barn, which had so long disfigured the lawn at Willow Creek, disappeared, as if by magic, in one night, as Cora put it, "like the baseless fabric of a vision!"

. . . . . .

Time passed, and changed the face of nature entirely. Wrecks were swept away; houses sprang up; fences were repaired; crops waved on the fields of Red River as of yore, and cattle browsed on the plains; so that if a stranger had visited that outlying settlement there would have been little to inform his eyes of the great disaster which had so recently swept over the place. But there would have been much to inform his ears, for it was many a day before the interest and excitement about the great flood went down. In fact, for a long time afterwards the flood was so much in the thoughts and mouths of the people that they might have been mistaken for the immediate descendants of those who had swarmed on the slopes of Ararat.

Let us now present a series of pictures for the reader's inspection.

The first is a little log-hut embosomed in bushes, with a stately tree rising close beside it. Flowers and berries bedeck the surrounding shrubbery, pleasant perfumes fill the air. A small garden, in which the useful and ornamental are blended, environs the hut. The two windows

are filled with glass, not parchment. A rustic porch, covered with twining plants, conceals the door, and a general air of tidiness marks all the surroundings. Need we say more to convince the intelligent reader that this is the hut of old Liz? It occupies the spot where it was deposited by the flood, the family having been allowed to remain there.

Under the genius of Herr Winklemann and Michel Rollin the old hut has displayed some characteristics of the cactus in sending forth offshoots from its own body. An offshoot in the rear is the kitchen; another on the right is a mansion, as large nearly as the parent, in which Winklemann has placed his mother, to the great relief of Daddy, who never forgot, and with difficulty forgave, the old woman's kicking habits when their legs reposed together on the table. It must be added, however, that the old people live on good terms, and that Mrs. Winklemann frequently visits Daddy, and smokes with him. The offshoot on the left, built by Michel, is a stable, and an excrescence beyond is a cow-house. There are fowls in front of the hut, and flour, sugar, pork, and tea within, so it may be concluded that the families are now in comfort.

When the improvements just mentioned were completed, Michel Rollin, unable to settle down, had arranged with Peegwish and Wildcat to go off on a fishing expedition. Before starting he entered the hut, and said to Winklemann, who was filling his "moder's" pipe for her—

"You vill be here ven I come back? You vill not leave the ol' peepil?"

"No; I vill stope till you retoorns. Be sure I vill take care of zee old vons. But dere is not much fear of anodor flood joost now."

"What says he, Liz?" asked old Daddy, with a hand to his ear. "Speak oot."

"Oh, he 's jist haverin' aboot the flood. He says there 's nae fear o' anither flood, an' I think he 's aboot right."

"I'm no sae sure o' *that*," returned Daddy, whose memory for the past was much stronger than for current events. "It 's been said, on the best authority, that there was a seemilar flood i' the year seeventeen hunner an' seeventy-sax, anither in seeventeen ninety, an' anither in aughteen hunner an' nine."

"Hoots! haud yer gab. What div *ye* ken aboot floods?"

Daddy, hearing nothing, and believing from the pleasant expression of Liz's countenance that she appreciated his remarks, nodded to Mrs. Winklemann cheerily, and smiled.

"Ha!" laughed her son; "you is von stranch being, old Liz—ver stranch."

Having finished the filling of his "moder's" pipe and lighted it for her, Herr Winklemann arose and followed his friend Michel out of the hut.

Let us look at another picture.

It is a pair of cottages close to each other, and about a stone's cast from the farm at Willow Creek. The buildings are new, and much alike in form and size. There are well-tilled fields around, and fat cattle and a few sheep. The insides of these mansions have not much to boast of in the way of ornament, but there is enough to display the influence, the good taste, and the refinement of woman.

Immediately after the abating of the waters Ian Macdonald and Louis Lambert set to work to build these houses, and you may be sure they were not long about it, for the tyrannical old father-in-law elect not only compelled them to take down the barn on the lawn before the weddings, but also to build houses for their brides.

And after the knots were tied and the dance on the lawn at Willow Creek was over, and the happy couples were fairly established in their own homes, they kept open house for a long time, and interchanged innumerable visits between Bearclaw Cottage (that was Ian's) and Hunter's Lodge (that was Lambert's) and the Ark on Ararat (that was the house of Angus) and Willow Creek, insomuch that Tony was heard one day to inform Miss Trim confidentially that he found it difficult to tell where he lived, or which was his proper home—and Miss Trim confessed that she was in much the same condition of mind.

"What an amazing time we have passed through!" said Miss Trim, referring to the flood, at one of their social gatherings.

"Yes," said Victor hastily, for he knew that Miss Trim was on the point of delivering one of her parenthetical and pointless orations, "it was indeed an amazing time! Such boating on the plains, and such camping out! To say nothing of tumbling into the water and being half drowned."

"By the way," asked Ian, "was not poor John Flett nearly drowned about the beginning of the flood?"

"Of course he was," said Mr. Ravenshaw, "and if it had not been for your father he and his family would have been lost altogether. Is not that so, Angus?"

"Well, it iss droont he would have been in all probabeelity," said Angus, "for he was on the wrong road when I met him, an' he couldn't find the right wan, whatever. Shon Flett iss a good man, but he iss also foolish. You see, when the watter came on him so strong that his hoose began to slup away, he took two of his oxen an' he tied them together wi' ropes, an' put planks on their backs, which he also tied; ay! an' so he made a sort of livin'

stage, on which he sat his wife and four children; two of them wass poys and the other two wass girls, whatever. The frightened craters went about the best way they could, sometimes wadin' an' sometimes sweemin', an' Shon, he wass leadin' them wi' a line roond their horns, an' he wass wadin' an' sweemin' also. I came across them wi' my poat an' took them in. That was just pefore we saw the hoose on fire floatin' down the river."

"The house on fire!" exclaimed Cora; "I did not hear of that."

"No wonder," said Lambert. "There have been so many strange incidents and hairbreadth escapes during the flood that we won't likely hear about them all for many a day to come."

"But what about the house on fire?" asked Victor; "was any one in it?"

"No, it was only a house that had been left somewhat hastily by its owners, who must have forgot to put out the fire or capsized something over it. At all events the house was seen floating down stream at night, and a splendid sight it was, burning furiously, with the flames glittering in the water that swept it away."

"How sad!" said Elsie, whose mind dwelt on the evil rather than on the picturesque aspect of the incident.

"I can't imagine what ever was the cause of the flood," remarked Mrs. Ravenshaw.

"Well, my dear," said her husband, in a somewhat oracular tone, "no one can certainly tell what caused it, but my own opinion is that it was caused by the unusual wetness of the fall. You remember how it rained; well, when the lakes and rivers were as full as they could hold, and the ground was soaking like a full sponge, the winter came on us suddenly and set all fast, thus preventing the water getting away. Then came the snow, also unusually

heavy. Then came a late spring with a sudden burst of warm weather, and a south wind for several days in succession, turning all this accumulation into water. Red Lake, Otter-tail Lake, and Lake Travers overflowed, as you know; the Red River ice burst up and jammed against the solid ice of Lake Winnipeg, which stopped the current, and thus caused the overflow. That's *my* notion about the flood. Whether it's right or no, who can tell?"

"Your observations, sir, are fery goot, whatever," said Angus, taking an unusually long draw at his pipe.

Turn we now to look upon one more picture. It is on the shores of the great lake—Lake Winnipeg. There, among a tangled but picturesque mass of reeds and bushes, a canoe is resting on the reeds, and, not far from it, a rude structure of boughs and bark has been set up. It is open in front, and before it burns a large fire, whose light, however, is paled by the effulgence of the glorious sun as it dips into the lake.

Petawanaquat is there, seated with a book on his knee, and a dignified, yet slightly perplexed expression on his face. His friend Sinclair is there too, teaching him to read the Word of God. Meekeye, faithful partner and sympathiser with the red man, is also there; and beside them reclines our friend Tony. That child's taste for hunting is strong. Having been—according to Miss Trim's report—a very good boy and *remarkably* diligent at his lessons, he has been granted a holiday and permission to go a-hunting with his red father. He is tired after the day's hunt, and reclines placidly awaiting supper, which Meekeye with downcast look prepares.

Having spent two hours over the Book that evening, Petawanaquat closed it slowly and looked up.

"You find it rather difficult to understand," said Sinclair, with a pleasant smile.

The red man rose, drew himself up, and, turning his black eyes, like the eagle, on the flashing sun, stretched out his hand.

"My brother," he said, "beholds the sun. Can he tell where it comes from, or whither it goes? No; but he understands that the Great Spirit guides its course, and he is satisfied. When Petawanaquat was a child he understood very little. He is a man now, and understands a little more. When the Great Spirit takes him up yonder, no doubt his mind shall be made bigger, and it shall be filled. The book that the Great Spirit has sent is very big. Some things in it are hard to understand, but the greatest thing of all is not hard. There is but *one thing needful.* Is not Jesus the one thing? Petawanaquat wishes to live for ever. To know the Great Spirit and Jesus is to live for ever. Petawanaquat has lived long and seen much. He has seen men torture men like evil spirits. He has seen scalps torn from men and women. He has seen little ones dashed against the stones. The spirit of Petawanaquat has groaned within him—he knew not why—perhaps the Great Spirit was speaking to him in his heart. 'Shall these deeds of evil never have an end?' he asked, but there was no answer. Now, an answer has come. Jesus is the Saviour *from sin.* All things shall be put under Him. When that time comes *all* things shall be good. At present good and evil are mixed."

The red man paused a moment, with a slightly troubled look, but the shadow passed like a fleeting cloud as he dropped his arm, and, with an air of simple humility, sat down again beside his friend.

"Petawanaquat is only a child," he added; "at present he is only learning. In good time he shall know all."

The sun's last rays were still gilding the horizon and

flickering on the waves of Winnipeg when the tired hunters lay down to rest. Gradually the camp-fire lost its ruddy glow; the evening breeze died slowly down; one by one the stars came out, and the soft curtain of night, descending like a gentle spirit on the wilderness, hid the red man and his comrades from mortal eyes, and wrapped them in profound repose.

THE END.

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